

Lowell CoC (MA-508)
Rating Process and Ranking Policy
Adopted by the Ranking and Review Committee on August 29, 2019

The Lowell Continuum of Care selects a Review, Rating and Ranking Committee each year. This committee is responsible for reviewing and updating the CoC's policy and approach to project ranking and review, on behalf of the CoC as part of the annual HUD Notice of Funding Availability process used to fund CoC projects. It is also the policy of the Lowell CoC to use the application ranking process to achieve success in pursuit of the goals and objectives described by HUD as well as local priorities that have been identified.

The Lowell CoC intends to merge with the MA Balance of State CoC following this cycle, at which time these projects will be ranked as part of the broader process.

Priorities:

1. End Homelessness for all Persons in the Lowell CoC Geography:

a. Using local data, the Lowell CoC will focus on subpopulations identified including, but not limited to, individuals and families who are chronically homeless, unaccompanied youth and young adults under 25, Veterans, individuals and families of diverse races, ethnicities and cultural identities, and those who are survivors of domestic violence or currently fleeing.

Furthermore, the City Manager's Task Force on Homelessness and Sustainable Housing reviewed local data and determined that the greatest need for resources is to meet the needs of long term homeless unaccompanied adults.

b. The Lowell CoC will support outreach strategies designed to identify and engage unsheltered individuals and families.

The City Manager's Task Force revealed that there are more than 20 groups providing outreach in Lowell. The CoC will leverage HMIS capacity grant resources to advance a strategy that coordinates these efforts.

c. The Lowell CoC Review, Rating and Ranking Committee will use local system performance measures data in evaluating new and renewal projects to identify those with the strongest performance and demonstrated ability to address the priorities of the region.

Lowell is using project level performance dashboards and APR results to evaluate renewal projects, to identify those with the strongest performance.

New projects will be evaluated based on their proposals and ability to meet the demonstrated need of the community.

d.. Quickly house and rehouse persons experiencing homelessness.

e. Identify people that are at risk of losing housing, and work to prevent homelessness

2. Create a Systemic Response to Homelessness:

a. Coordinate system planning efforts throughout Lowell and in coordination with the City Manager's Task Force

- b. Encourage and support participation from persons with lived homeless experiences
 - c. Ensure equal and fair access to all CoC program-funded projects
 - d. Promote participant choice, privacy, and dignity
 - e. Implement and operate an effective Coordinated Entry process
 - f. Measure system performance
 - g. Continue to support and encourage the delivery of homeless assistance within the CoC in an open, inclusive and transparent manne
3. Strategically Allocate Resources Within the Lowell CoC Region:
- a. The Lowell CoC will undertake comprehensive and regular reviews of CoC project quality, performance and cost-effectiveness.
 - b. The Lowell CoC membership will support and encourage the achievement of self-sufficiency for households experiencing homelessness by maximizing the use of mainstream and other community-based resources (housing, employment/income, non-cash benefits), and resource- and referral-sharing among Lowell CoC members.
4. Implement Low Barrier Practices (participants will not be screened out based on the following):
- a. Having too little or no income;
 - b. Active or history of substance use;
 - c. Having a criminal record with exceptions for state-mandated restrictions;
 - d. History of victimization (e.g. domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and/or stalking); or
 - e. Having a history of eviction from rental housing.
5. Implement a Housing First Approach (participants will not be terminated for the following):
- a. Failure to participate in supportive services;
 - b. Failure to make progress on a service plan;
 - c. Loss of income or failure to improve income; or
 - d. Any other activity not covered in a lease agreement typically found for unassisted persons in the project's geographic area.
6. Develop and maintain relationships with property owners/managers and landlords in order to preserve and expand available housing for people experiencing and at risk of homelessness
7. Prioritize CoC Program funds to serve populations based upon the severity of needs and vulnerability. This includes, but is not limited to:
- a. Individuals and families experiencing chronic homelessness;
 - b. Persons with one or more disabling conditions of long duration;
 - c. Persons fleeing and/or with a history of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and/or stalking;
 - d. Households with children under 18 years of age;
 - e. Unaccompanied youth and young adults under 25;
 - f. Households with low or no income;
 - g. Current or past substance use; or
 - h. Criminal histories.

Threshold Requirements:

In order to be included, all projects, both renewal and new, must meet the threshold requirements in the FY19 CoC NOFA for project applicant eligibility, project component eligibility, project quality threshold and project renewal threshold.

In addition, renewal applications must be submitted in esnaps no later than August 26, 2019. Applications must be consistent with the Consolidated Plan. The agency can have no outstanding HUD monitoring or OIG Audit findings that are overdue. The Project must comply with the requirements of the CoC Interim rule (24 CFR part 578), including requirements to participate in the Coordinated Entry (CE) System and the Lowell CoC HMIS.

Project scoring and ranking tools for new and renewal projects are developed in consultation with the Review, Rating and Ranking Committee and approved by the Lowell CoC Advisory Board. The final tool will be made available through email distribution and on the Collaborative Applicant's (CA), (the City of Lowell) website as well as on partner websites.

Ranking and Scoring Tool:

The Lowell CoC uses a custom Ranking Tool that is based on the HUD tool (see screenshots in Appendix 1). It includes categories, with specific criteria for:

1. CoC Thresholds: Defined by HUD including data quality; financial feasibility; etc.
2. Exits to Permanent Housing: Based on APR results
3. New or Increased Income and Earned Income: Based on APR results
4. Other and Local Criteria: The narrative provided, and CoC monitoring score
5. Project Effectiveness: Housing First/ low barrier
6. Serves High Need Population: Disabilities and income at entry; chronic homelessness for PSH programs, and CoC-defined TH targeting criteria

The CoC issues an [RFP for new projects](#) which details the purpose and criteria for new projects. All proposals for new projects are due electronically in Word format to the City Department of Planning and Development. The Ranking and Review committee assesses these proposals based on the criterion provided and will select up to three (3) projects to be included with the application – a project to meet the criteria for the DV Bonus; a reallocation PSH project for chronically homeless or Dedicated Plus; and a PSH Housing Bonus project for chronically homeless or Dedicated Plus.

The CoC also notifies all organizations with [project renewals](#) applications about the criteria that will be used for ranking and scoring. Renewal applications are accepted in esnaps for review, with a final deadline. Renewing projects all have updated data in HomelessData.com which can be processed for ranking. Unidentified data from the APR of the Alternative House Transitional Housing program has been manually added into the tool to avoid importing data directly.

The sources of information to complete the ranking tool may include, but are not limited to, HUD Priorities, this Ranking Policy, HMIS, Annual Performance Reports, match documentation, bed/unit utilization, HMIS Data Quality Reports, Annual CoC PIT counts and other need-based reports, CoC project applications, responses to the Request for Proposals, and calls with project applicants during Ranking Committee meetings.

Ranking Process

Project ranking will be divided into Tier 1 and Tier 2: 94% of the Lowell CoC ARD plus 100% of first time renewals will be included in Tier 1, and the remaining 6% into Tier 2. The score each project receives on the ranking tool will determine the position of the project in Tiers 1 and/or 2, and in the Priority Listing which accompanies the Consolidated Application.

The Lowell CoC has defined the following ranking priorities for funding under the FY19 HUD CoC NOFA:

Prioritize permanent housing through PSH or DedicatedPLUS program for long term and disabled homeless individuals as recommended by the City Manager's Task Force on Homelessness and Sustainable Housing through

Using local data to inform policy and programs has been identified as a top priority for the region.

The region prioritizes awards to agencies that are active participants and that demonstrate coordinated efforts to end homelessness in Lowell.

The ranking tool takes into account performance data including serving the population with the most needs and highest vulnerability; serving the target population; and, generates positive housing and income outcomes.

In case two or more housing projects receive the same score, they will be ranked in order of preference as indicated in the Lowell CoC Priority Ranking Preference project types and components listed below.

1. Permanent Supportive Housing with either 90% of beds dedicated to chronically homeless, or classified as Dedicated PLUS
2. Permanent Supportive Housing or Rapid Rehousing renewal with Housing First and low barrier entry focus
3. Domestic Violence housing

The last funded project in Tier 1 may 'straddle' Tiers 1 and 2 if that project causes the amount of Tier 1 to exceed 94% of the Lowell CoC ARD, with the portion in excess of 94% going into Tier 2.

The Review Committee reserves the right to shift a project's ranking either to break scoring ties, or to maximize the number of CoC projects that can be fully funded if placed in Tier 1.

Project Determinations and Appeals Process

Applications which do not meet the minimum threshold requirements will not be ranked or included in the CoC Consolidated Application submitted to HUD. New projects that have not yet begun or completed their grant term will be held harmless and ranked in Tier 1, unless determined otherwise by the CoC Review, Rating and Ranking Committee due to special circumstances (i.e. non-compliance with HUD regulations and/or CoC policies, violation of state/federal laws, withdrawal, etc.), or, due to their ranking with other projects, fall below the 94% cutoff.

The Collaborative Applicant (CA) will send formal notification of a preliminary determination made by the Lowell CoC Review, Rating and Ranking Committee to each project applicant along with individual project ranking summary, individual project ranking number, and any potential budget reduction or increase).

The CA will provide all appeals to the Lowell CoC Review, Rating and Ranking Committee to make a final determination that will be sent to the Lowell CoC full membership for a review, vote (minus any and all voting members with a bias or conflict of interest) and posting to the City and partner websites.

Scoring Categories:

Scoring Group: Lowell 2019 Ranking and Review						
Scoring Categories	Scoring Criteria	Scoring Projects	Project Performance			
<input type="button" value="Add New Category"/>	<input type="button" value="Remove Selected Category"/>					
Name	Criteria Count	Project Count	Total Points - TH	Total Points - RRH	Total Points - PSH	Source Type
Bonus	4	9			100	Manual Entry
CoC Thresholds	26	5	0	0	0	Mixed
Exits to Permanent Housing	3	5	25	25	25	HMIS Data
New or Increased Income and Earned Income	12	5	10	10	10	HMIS Data
Other and Local Criteria	6	5	20	20	20	Mixed
Project Effectiveness	6	5	30	30	30	Manual Entry
Serves High Need Populations	8	5	40	20	40	Manual Entry

Scoring Criteria for Each Category:

Scoring Group: Lowell 2019 Ranking and Review						
Scoring Categories	Scoring Criteria	Scoring Projects	Project Performance			
<input type="button" value="Select Scoring Category"/>						
Category Name	Criteria List					
Bonus	<input type="button" value="Add New Criteria"/>					
CoC Thresholds						
Exits to Permanent Housing						
New or Increased Income and Earn...						
Other and Local Criteria						
Project Effectiveness						
Serves High Need Populations						
Name	Weight	Max Threshold	HMIS Report Source	Type	Project T...	
Minimum percent move to permanent housing	25	>= 90 %	[APR-Q23a R:1-11,C:1 + APR-...	HMIS Report Calculati...	RRH	
Minimum percent remain in or move to permanent housing	25	>= 90 %	[APR-Q5a R:1,C:1 - [APR-Q23...	HMIS Report Calculati...	PSH	
Minimum percent move to permanent housing	25	>= 90 %	[APR-Q23a R:1-11,C:1 + APR-...	HMIS Report Calculati...	TH	

With a list of Projects to be Scored in each Category:

Scoring Group: Lowell 2019 Ranking and Review						
Scoring Categories	Scoring Criteria	Scoring Projects	Project Performance			
<input type="button" value="Select Scoring Category"/>						
Category Name	Project List					
Bonus	<input type="button" value="Assign New Project"/> <input type="button" value="Assign All Projects"/> <input type="button" value="Remove Selected Project"/>					
CoC Thresholds						
Exits to Permanent Housing						
New or Increased Income and Earn...						
Other and Local Criteria						
Project Effectiveness						
Serves High Need Populations						
Name	Type	Persons Served				
117- Youth Rapid Rehousing	Rapid Re-Housing (RRH)	0				
117- Youth Transitional Housing	Transitional Housing (TH)	0				
289 - Pathfinder - 693	Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)	14				
AH - Transitional Housing	Transitional Housing (TH)					
Pathfinder Apartments	Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH)	12				

And a Final Project Performance Score.

The final score combines data from the APR with manually entered information

Scoring Group: Lowell 2019 Ranking and Review						
Scoring Categories		Scoring Criteria		Scoring Projects		Project Performance
Project Ranking			Project Scoring: 117- Youth Rapid Rehousing			
Category	Criteria	Max Threshold	Partial Threshold	Actual Score	Awarded Points	Available
CoC Thresholds	Acceptable organization audit/financial review	Yes		Manual Entry Required		
CoC Thresholds	Applicant is an active CoC Participant	Yes		Manual Entry Required		
CoC Thresholds	Application is complete and data are consistent	Yes		Manual Entry Required		
CoC Thresholds	Bed/unit utilization rate at or above 90%	>= 90 %		Manual Entry Required		
CoC Thresholds	Data quality overall error rate	<= 10 %		0 %	0	
CoC Thresholds	Documented organization financial stability	Yes		Manual Entry Required		
CoC Thresholds	Documented, secured minimum match	Yes		Manual Entry Required		
CoC Thresholds	Housing First and/or Low Barrier Implementation	Yes		Manual Entry Required		
CoC Thresholds	Project is financially feasible	Yes		Manual Entry Required		
Exits to Permanent Housing	Minimum percent move to permanent housing	>= 90 %		0 %	0	
New or Increased Income and Earned I...	Minimum new or increased earned income for project leavers	>= 8 %		0 %	0	
New or Increased Income and Earned I...	Minimum new or increased earned income for project stayers	>= 8 %		0 %	0	
New or Increased Income and Earned I...	Minimum new or increased non-employment income for project leavers	>= 10 %		0 %	0	