

NOFA Committee

February 27, 2017

Minutes

Attendees: Eli Hamilton (HomeBase), Sasha Drozdova (HomeBase), Katherine Finnigan (LifeMoves), Cathy Dreyer (LifeMoves), Hilary Barroga (Office of Supportive Housing), Ben Kong (Office of Supportive Housing), Liz Lucas (Abode), Lynn Morrison (Abode), Pilar Furlong (BWC), Erin Stanton (Office of Supportive Housing), Alejandra Herrera (Destination:Home), Laura Foster (BWC), Grace Davis (West Valley Community Services)

I. Welcome & Introductions

II. 2016 CoC Program NOFA Competition

a. Summary of Local Process

HomeBase provided an overview of our local competition process, including how data and information are collected from providers and evaluated by the Rank & Review Panel to generate a ranked list which is submitted for CoC Board approval.

b. Debrief & Feedback

The pre-NOFA panel was a welcome change because it allowed the panel to devote enough time to review projects' budget, policies, and evaluation reports. It was clarified that the Rank & Review Panel reserves the right to change any scores assigned at the pre-NOFA during the post-NOFA review.

Attendees expressed gratitude that the Santa Clara process is transparent and easy.

III. 2017 CoC Program NOFA Competition

a. Renewal Scoring Factors

HomeBase underscored the growing importance of outcomes data in project review and CoC competitiveness. The CoC is looking to emphasize outcomes (including data quality) and Housing First implementation in the 2017 competition.

b. Questions & Discussion

The group discussed proposed changes to the renewal scoring tool.

i. Factor 1B: Housing Stability

This factor measures the percentage of formerly homeless individuals who remain housed in a project or exited to other permanent housing.

It was noted that the only remaining CoC-funded transitional housing in Santa Clara County is youth-targeted. HomeBase added that by inserting language to highlight this fact to the scoring tool underscores that the CoC is prioritizing programs in alignment with HUD values.

The proposed revised scoring tool would provide Rank & Review Panelists more flexibility to deviate from scaled scores because the higher standards set by the new scales would have a significant impact on small projects with few participants.

Projects without leavers are held harmless under this factor and awarded full points because, otherwise, their scores would be either zero or a mathematical impossibility. This applies to all project types.

Currently RRH is at 72% and TH is at 54% communitywide, but Erin believes that the numbers are higher in CoC-funded programs.

ii. Factor 1C: Returns to Homelessness Within 12 Months

This is a newly proposed factor that would measure the percentage of leavers to permanent housing destinations in the year prior to the measurement period who returned to a homeless project in HMIS within 12 months. Projects with no leavers in the prior year and projects without at least 2 years of performance data will receive full points.

HomeBase clarified that contacts with ES, TH, RRH, or PSH would signal a return to homelessness. In the 2017 competition, 2015 leavers would be evaluated based on 2016 data.

It was noted that it is difficult to follow up with outcomes – there is no money or staff time to do this and clients do not stay in touch. If they return to the system, it makes us wonder, “What if they had reached out to our program? Maybe we could have done something to prevent the return.” To allay some concerns, Erin noted that as a community we are doing well on this point and are quite close to the benchmarks we set. Having more discretion would be helpful for panelists because small programs could be affected greatly by just one return – it was suggested that instead of a one-point leeway, panelists should have full discretion.

It was underscored that the way that HUD runs this measure is by counting individuals, not households, so large families can impact the measure greatly. It was suggested that we determine whether BitFocus can run the measure for households rather than individuals.

iii. 1F: Alignment with Housing First Principles

The proposed expansion of this factor includes a review of program policies to determine whether clients are screened out or terminated for reasons not compliant with Housing First values and a review of a project narrative regarding how the provider affirmatively advances Housing First within its programs.

A participant expressed concern that 15 points seems like a lot of points for this factor. HomeBase explained that the allocation reflects the CoC’s focus on integrating Housing First into all its programs. Hilary noted that the CoC Board indicated that if points were removed from this factor, they should be added to factors pertaining to program outcomes. She added that the CoC is looking to ensure that program policies and practices are aligned.

The group observed that this is an opportunity to update policies and that it is helpful that programs will have space to elaborate.

HomeBase noted that providers can address this factor by submitting one policy across all projects or a separate policy for each project if they are different. Eli inquired whether it would be most helpful to ask a broad question regarding policies and a separate question about Housing First policies and how to provide examples of affirmatively furthering Housing First while making it clear that the list of examples is not exhaustive. The group noted that the question should read, “Examples may

include” and note that the list is not exhaustive. The group expressed concern that some examples may not apply to all project types and that more

Hilary observed that it might be helpful to the panel to ask applicants to provide a crosswalk between policies and these factors. Eli replied that HomeBase could build that into the RFI.

HomeBase noted that this factor is not all-or-nothing and that projects can score in between. A concern was raised that the examples listed in the proposed factor do not apply to all project types and that it may be tricky to provide discretion to panelists on this point.

Hilary underscored that this factor evaluates whether a project is truly committed to Housing First or just doing the bare minimum to be compliant. The question of whether panelists have enough understanding to make that judgment was raised. In addition, a project pursuing many strategies is not necessarily better than one doing a couple things very well.

How would a panelist score this factor? One would want to see evidence of staff training, story examples of success, etc. One way to do this is to provide a space for applicants to describe and differentiate projects. Hilary proposed training the panelists on Housing First. It was proposed to provide the Housing First examples to applicants on the supplemental application, but not to the panel on the scoring tool. The list may be given in the TA workbook.

iv. 3A: Administrative Capacity was removed and replaced with a reduced 3A: Compliance factor

This factor is one where the panel wished they had more guidance. This is where agencies might be asked to provide explanation of any outstanding monitoring findings. Panelists thought an org chart might be useful as well. The panel wants to understand where a project falls within an organization and how many people are working on it.

Hilary noted that the tool should make it clear to the panelists that they should award full points to projects without outstanding monitoring findings.

Is it beneficial to panelists to hear a report on TA visits? It seems like too much to ask about systems to ensure compliance for only 5 points. This would be something to cite if an agency has monitoring findings.

v. 3B: Unspent Grant Funds was reduced to 5 points

Everyone is comfortable with this.

vi. 4A: Exits to Known Destinations has a more aggressive scale, and there was a similar change to 4D: Known Benefits

Measuring this factor at follow up or exit means that it will apply to stayers and leavers and will incentivize data quality improvement and consistency of data entry. A concern was raised that sometimes people do not want some of their information in HMIS. Hilary responded that in such a case, the agency might want to provide a narrative explanation.

What does follow up mean? Is there a report to run in HMIS for this factor? There might be an assumption in the database that there was no change because HMIS does not consider whether there are two points – just whether there is data.

vii. 3C: Alignment with CoC Priorities

The panelists asked for more guidance regarding what should be considered here -- what kinds of evidence might we include here?

What does a move-on strategy mean for PSH? An example might be a partnership with another subsidy provider that is lighter on services to ensure that clients receiving PSH assistance are those who need the associated intensive services. The trouble is that the program needs client buy in to be able to do this – this can be quite a challenge in PSH. This is compounded by the fact that it is very difficult to develop partnerships with other subsidy providers, unless it is enough to say that clients are on Section 8 waitlists.

Is PSH move-on a relevant enough strategy on a project level that we include it as a list of examples? Is it negative to have it there? If it is going to be there, the list of examples needs to be longer. And that is where the initial assessment comes into play too. Now the community is at a great place with PSH screening, but we were not always and have some legacy projects that have clients who are not engaging in services and just need the financial subsidy.

It would be great to include examples by project type. The trouble is also that there aren't many options for move on besides subsidized housing for populations other than youth. We could add as an example of how quickly project fills vacant spots. Another question might be how is an agency using the reports run by the community to revise goals to improve outcomes?

IV. NOFA Committee Scheduling

a. March Meeting

BitFocus will be in attendance to explain new APR process and how it will work in Clarity.

The group will resume discussion of scoring factors 1C, 1F and 3C.

b. April Meeting

V. Thank You!