



MISSISSIPPI
BALANCE OF STATE
CONTINUUM OF CARE

CONTINUUM OF CARE FY24-FY25 COMPETITION PROCESS REVISED AUGUST 2024

BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Organization of the Mississippi Balance of State Continuum of Care

The Mississippi Balance of State Continuum of Care (BoS) is comprised of the 71 rural counties in Mississippi and represents diverse populations, needs, and capabilities. The 71 counties within the Mississippi BoS are further organized into 5 Regions that engage in collaborative planning around homeless programming. A map of the Mississippi BoS Regional Coalitions can be found at: <https://msbos.org/coverage-area/>.

The CoC Governing Council is the primary decision-making body of the CoC Membership. The CoC Governing Council has designated Mississippi United to End Homeless (MUTEH) as the Collaborative Applicant for the Mississippi BoS. In this role, MUTEH is responsible for submitting the annual consolidated application for CoC Program funding on behalf of the CoC. In turn, MUTEH has contracted with the CoC to provide primary staff support to the daily activities of the CoC.

HUD's Continuum of Care Program and the Annual Continuum of Care Competition

Every year, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) makes available federal resources for homeless programming to communities around the country through its Continuum of Care (CoC) Program and its annual CoC Competition. Continuums access these funds by completing consolidated applications on behalf of the federally funded homeless programs in their CoC. For the BoS, the Collaborative Applicant facilitates this process and submits the consolidated application. Any organization located within the 71 counties of the that wishes to access CoC Program funds must participate in local homeless planning efforts and the annual BoS CoC Competition to do so.

TARGET AUDIENCE

This 2024-2025 CoC competition process is only applicable to HUD CoC-funded projects renewing or reallocating their CoC project funding, or those organizations approved to apply for funding for a new CoC funded project.

PURPOSE

This document is intended to provide CoC membership with basic information about the BoS 2024-2025 CoC Competition, priorities for projects, and the process for completion of the 2024-2025 MS BoS consolidated application.

GOALS & PRIORITIES FOR 2024-2025 COC COMPETITION

The Governing Council has identified the following priorities for the 2024-2025 BoS CoC Competition:

- Addressing Individual Unsheltered Homelessness
- Addressing homelessness in geographical regions of MS Balance of State CoC with the highest populations of homelessness
- Addressing Chronic Homelessness

HUD NOFO Policy Priorities

Ending homelessness for all persons. To end homelessness, CoCs should identify, engage, and effectively serve all persons experiencing homelessness. CoCs should measure their performance based on local data that consider the challenges faced by all subpopulations experiencing homelessness in the geographic area. CoCs should partner with housing, health care, and supportive services providers to expand housing options, such as permanent supportive housing, housing subsidies, and rapid rehousing. Additionally, CoCs should use local data to determine the characteristics of individuals and families with the highest needs and longest experiences of homelessness to develop housing and supportive services tailored to their needs.

Use a Housing First Approach. CoC Program funded projects should help individuals and families move quickly into permanent housing, and CoCs should measure and help projects reduce the length of time people experience homelessness. Additionally, CoCs should engage landlords and property owners to identify housing units available for rapid rehousing and permanent supportive housing participants, remove barriers to entry, and adopt client-centered service methods. HUD encourages CoCs to assess how well Housing First approaches are being implemented in their communities.

Reducing Unsheltered Homelessness. CoCs should explore all available resources, including CoC and ESG-funded assistance, housing subsidies, and supportive services to provide permanent housing options for people who are unsheltered. CoCs should work with law enforcement and their state and local governments to eliminate policies and practices that criminalize homelessness.

Improving System Performance. CoCs should be using system performance measures to determine how effectively they are serving people experiencing homelessness. Additionally, CoCs should use their Coordinated Entry process to promote participant choice, coordinate homeless assistance and mainstream housing, and services to ensure people experiencing homelessness receive assistance quickly, and make homelessness assistance open, inclusive, and transparent. CoCs should review all projects eligible for renewal in FY 2024-2025 to

determine their effectiveness in serving people experiencing homelessness, including cost-effectiveness. CoCs should also look for opportunities to implement continuous quality improvement and other process improvement strategies.

Partnering with Housing, Health and Service Agencies. Using cost performance and outcome data, CoCs should improve how all available resources are utilized to end homelessness. HUD encourages CoCs to maximize the use of mainstream and other community-based resources when serving persons experiencing homelessness and should:

- Work closely with public and private healthcare organizations and assist program participants to receive primary care, receive housing related services, and obtain medical insurance to address healthcare needs.
- Partner closely with PHAs and state and local housing organizations to utilize coordinated entry, develop housing units, and provide housing subsidies to people experiencing homelessness.
- Partner with local workforce development centers to improve employment opportunities.
- Work with Tribal organizations to ensure that Tribal members can access CoC-funded assistance when a CoC's geographic area borders a Tribal area.

Racial Equity. CoCs should review local policies, procedures, and processes with attention to identifying barriers that result in racial disparities and taking steps to eliminate barriers to improve racial equity and to address disparities.

Improving Assistance to LGBTQ+ individuals. CoCs should address the needs LGBTQ+, transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary individuals and families in their planning processes. Additionally, when considering which projects to select in their local competition to be included in their application to HUD, CoCs should ensure privacy, respect, safety, and access regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation in projects. CoCs should also consider partnering with organizations with expertise in serving LGBTQ+ populations.

Persons with Lived Experience. HUD expects CoCs to include people with lived homeless expertise and experience in their local planning and decision-making process. CoC leaders and stakeholders should prioritize hiring people who have experienced homelessness in areas where their expertise is needed.

Building an Effective Workforce. HUD is applying cost of living adjustments to supportive service activities and other staffing-focused budget lines to allow CoC budgets to better keep up with rising costs. HUD also encourages CoCs to work with their funders and other community stakeholders to improve pay and support for people who work in the homelessness sector.

Increasing Affordable Housing Supply. CoCs should be communicating with jurisdiction leaders about the harmful effects of the lack of affordable housing, and they should engage local leaders about steps such as zoning and land use reform that would increase the supply of affordable housing. This FY 2024-2025 CoC NOFO awards points to CoCs that take steps to engage local leaders about increasing affordable housing supply.

FUNDING AVAILABILITY FOR 2024-2025 BOS COC PROJECTS

Approximately, \$ 3.6 billion is available nationally in the FY 2024-2025 CoC Program Competition. The Mississippi Balance of State CoC has access to \$3,657,253 in renewal project funding (our Annual Renewal Demand amount), and up to \$1,025,479 in CoC Bonus Funding for new projects (PH-PSH; PH-RRH; Joint TH and PH-RRH; HMIS [Dedicated]; SSO-Coordinated Entry).

The Continuum also has access to \$1,281,849 in Bonus Funding dedicated to Domestic Violence projects (PH-RRH; Joint TH and PH-RRH; SSO- Coordinated Entry).

ELIGIBLE COC PROJECT SUBMISSIONS

Eligible Activities and Funding Requests

Applicants should only request funding for activities (leasing, rental assistance, etc.) that are eligible for that particular component type. For example, if an applicant wants to apply for the Rapid Re-housing project component, they can only request funding for rental assistance and supportive services; they cannot request funding for leasing or operations. Applicants should review the CoC Program Interim Final Rule, which can be found at <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2033/hearth-coc-program-interim-rule/> to make sure they understand all program regulations and eligible costs and activities.

Applicants should strive to ensure that their proposed project conversions will serve at least as many households annually as their current CoC project.

New CoC Project Applications

In 2024-2025, the CoC will consider project proposals/applications for:

- New permanent supportive housing projects that will serve 100% chronically homeless families and individuals (Dedicated PLUS)
- New rapid re-housing projects that will serve homeless individuals and families coming directly from the streets or emergency shelters, and includes persons fleeing domestic violence situations and other persons meeting the criteria of paragraph (4) of the definition of homelessness. This includes unaccompanied youth.
- Joint transitional housing (TH) and permanent housing-rapid rehousing (PH-RRH) component projects that will serve homeless individuals and

families including those fleeing domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking (see NOFO) for further details).

- Dedicated HMIS project (for the HMIS Lead only)
- Supportive Services project to develop or operate a centralized or coordinated assessment system.

Eligible New CoC Project Applicants

To be considered for funding, applicants must have at least 1 year of data in the **MS Balance of State AWARDS HMIS**, OR if providing services to victims of domestic violence applicants must participate in a comparable database. If an applicant does not have a year of data in HMIS or a comparable database, they must meet HUD's project capacity threshold. **Also, all CoC application submissions must be in conformity with the CoC's system-wide written program standards.**

PROCESS FOR SUBMITTING COC PROJECT APPLICATIONS

All projects (new and renewal) must submit an application with all required attachments. **All project applications must be completed in *e-snaps*, the electronic grants management system used by HUD's Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS).** If you are new to the system, click the links below to access and register for *e-snaps*.

- [e-snaps – Homepage](#)
- If you do not have an *e-snaps* user account, select "Create a Profile" from the *e-snaps* [log-in](#) page.

Separate applications must be filed for individual projects with the following attachments:

- **Most recent APR (if applicable)**
- **Most recent A-133 Audit or certified Financial Statements**
- **Copy of 501© (3) documentation**
- **Copy of Agency Code of Conduct**
- **Match Documentation**

Applications must be received before or on the announced due date.

Applicant agencies must enter their accepted project in the [e-snaps](#) electronic grants management system prior to being ranked for funding. Applicants will

receive written notice that their project has been accepted and will be ranked as part of the CoC Consolidated Application, or that their application has been denied and the reason for denial.

Project Application Technical Assistance

In addition to reading BoS CoC guidance documents related to the 2024-2025 CoC Competition and participating in any available webinars or trainings, CoC grantees are encouraged to read all relevant guidance materials available at <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/e-snaps/>. HUD has created numerous documents to help grantees learn about e-snaps and how to successfully submit project applications.

CoC grantees can contact the CoC Director (cocdirector@msbos.org), with any questions about project applications or the 2024-2025 CoC Competition Process.

COC PROJECT EVALUATION PROCESS

The CoC Governing Council worked with a TA firm, Homebase to develop the CoC project evaluation process and developing a preliminary project ranking approach. The evaluation process and related project ranking help the CoC fully maximize CoC Program funds, make informed funding decisions, and continue to move the CoC towards our goal of ending homelessness.

In 2024-2025, the Rank and Review Committee will use the Homebase developed rating and ranking tool that was based on **HUD's Rating and Ranking Tool**. The Project Rating and Ranking Tool can be utilized by CoCs to evaluate projects and set ranking priorities within the CoC. The tool helps the CoC to create objective, performance-based scoring criteria and selection priorities that are approved by the CoC to determine the extent to which each project addresses HUD's policy priorities. The CoC will reallocate funds to new projects whenever reallocation can improve outcomes and reduce homelessness and consider how much each project spends to serve and house an individual or family as compared to other projects serving similar populations.

The tools can be viewed here: <https://msbos.org/coc-app/#support-docs>

Threshold Review for Project Applications

The purpose of the threshold review is to determine whether an applicant meets basic eligibility requirements for funding. Projects that do not meet all of the

threshold criteria outlined below will not be further reviewed by the CoC.

The Tool contains 11 HUD-suggested CoC threshold requirements:

1. Applicant has active System for Award Management (SAM) registration with current information. To register for SAM, [see instructions here](#).
2. Applicant must also confirm organization's Employer/Tax Identification Number (TIN) and Unique Entity Identifier (UEI/SAM) information is correct in both SAM.gov and the e-snaps Project application.
3. Applicant has no outstanding delinquent Federal debts– it is HUD policy, consistent with the purposes and intent of 31 USC 3720B and 28 USC 3201(e), that applicants with outstanding delinquent federal debt will not be eligible to receive an award of funds unless: (a) A negotiated repayment schedule is established and the repayment schedule is not delinquent, or (b) other arrangements satisfactory to HUD are made before the award of funds by HUD.
4. Applicant has no Debarment and/or Suspensions from doing business with the Federal Government.
5. Disclosed any violations of Federal criminal law.
6. Submitted the required certifications as specified in the FY2024-2025
7. Demonstrated the population to be served meets program eligibility requirements as described in the Act, and project application clearly established eligibility of project applicants.
8. Agreed to participate in the [Continuum of Care's Homeless Management Information System \(HMIS\)](#).
9. (If renewal project application) Met HUD expectations, including: (a) applicant performance met the plans and goals established in the initial application, (b) the applicant demonstrated timeliness standards for grant being renewed and expenditure of grant funds, (c) the applicant's performance in assisting program participants to achieve and maintain independence living and records of success
10. Met financial expectations as set forth by HUD including (a) Registering for the electronic Line of Credit Control System (eLOCCS – see registration instruction here) (b) Having Accounting Software (c) Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP) (c) Annual A-133 audits (d) and other requirements as set forth by HUD
11. Demonstrate Project is Consistent with Jurisdictional Consolidated Plan(s).

The CoC can update these definitions to be consistent with local requirements including increasing threshold requirements as appropriate. In addition to HUD

Threshold Requirements, applicants must also meet CoC Threshold Requirements as follows:

CoC Threshold Requirement	Definition
Coordinated Entry Participation	The project participates or intends to participate in coordinated entry in compliance with the CoC's Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures and HUD's Coordinated Entry Notice.
Housing First and/or Low Barrier Implementation	The project is, or intends to be, designed and implemented using Housing First principles including: no preconditions or barriers to entry except as required by funding sources, and provision of necessary supports to maintain housing and prevent a return to homelessness.
Documented, secured minimum match	Applicant has match commitments that satisfy CoC Program Rule requirements for source and amount.
Project has reasonable costs per permanent housing exit as defined locally	Cost per permanent housing exit can be determined by dividing total project costs by the number of permanent housing exits. These costs can be averaged across all projects within a project type to determine the average cost per permanent housing exit for the community for that project type. The CoC can use this information to define a reasonable cost locally.
Project is financially feasible	Project has funding commitments equal to or exceeding project budget.
Applicant is active CoC Participant	Applicant participation in CoC Board and committee meetings meets CoC requirements for a member in good standing.
Application is complete and data are consistent	All required information is completed and all required attachments are provided. Data provided in response to different questions match.
Data quality at or above 90%	Data elements required by HUD and the CoC have a 90% or higher completion rate.
Bed/unit utilization rate at or above 90%	Beds or units in the project are occupied 90% or more of the operating year.
Acceptable organizational audit/financial review	Applicant's audit or financial review does not contain findings or other indications of financial or accounting problems.
Documented organizational financial stability	Applicant's financial statements for previous fiscal year demonstrates financial stability sufficient to support operation of the project during the next operating year.

Other CoC threshold review criteria desired includes the following:

- Eligible localities: Projects must be located within the CoCs geographic area. The Balance of State CoC's coverage area be viewed here: <https://msbos.org/coverage-area/>
- PIT Count: Projects must have provided leadership in their community during the Point in Time count.

If the project fails to meet all the given criteria, then the review committee will not review the project any further and will send feedback to the applicant concerning the failure to meet threshold. If the project meets requirements, it will be rated via the NEW OR RENEWAL/EXPANSION RATING TOOL.

New & Renewal/Expansion Project Rating Tool

The Rating tool factors in criteria for multiple project types. The Ranking Committee is able to decide which criteria should be a factor within the project ranking decision. New Projects will be judged by different criteria than renewal/expansion projects. The tool does not rate HMIS, SSO, or Planning projects. After the completion of rating each project, the tool allows the Committee to input the appropriate funding details and rank the projects in both tiers as desired.

Scoring

In the Rating Tool, each Performance measure is assigned a maximum point value. As a program performance numbers get closer to factor/goal, the project scores more points. The points become a part of the total score for the project. Projects can score up to 120 maximum points. The rating score is then used to rank the projects in satisfactory order.

Evaluating Cost Effectiveness

Renewal CoC projects are evaluated on cost effectiveness - namely, the annual cost to retain or move someone into permanent housing. In order to evaluate cost effectiveness, all renewal CoC projects must submit annual project budget information (for their last grant period) to CoC staff. Budget information should include CoC funds and all other cash match associated with the CoC project.

COC PROJECT RANKING

After completing all project evaluations the Rank and Review Committee will preliminarily rank all eligible projects according to their rating score – e.g., projects with higher scores will be ranked higher in the project listing. The Committee will also consider other priorities during ranking such as:

- The priority of new projects
- The importance of renewal projects
- Performance Measures: Determined via HUD Rating and Ranking Tool using HMIS info
- Performance Measures: performance within project type based on CoC adopted standards from the most recent APR available and MPRs generated by HMIS (Utilization Rates)
- Spending Reports including unspent funds
- HUD and CoC Monitoring Reports
- Agency Capacity: Determined by threshold requirements
- Target population as identified by unmet need analysis (PIT Count)
- Project Service Area
- CoC system-wide projects, such as HMIS and CES, are ranked as Tier 1 to support MSBOS operations annually.

CoC Project Ranking Publishing

Results of the project rankings will be released in October 2024 and posted on the CoC’s website at <https://msbos.org/coc-app-rankings/> .

APPEALING COC PROJECT RANKING

If an applicant has a complaint, the applicant can file an appeal via the MSBOS Appeals Policy and Procedure.

FINAL SUBMISSION OF THE COC CONSOLIDATED APPLICATION

After all renewal projects and new CoC project applications have been received, reviewed, and ranked, the CoC Collaborative Applicant (MUTEH Inc.) will prepare the CoC Project Ranking list on behalf of the Mississippi BoS. Once the Governing Council has approved the listing, MUTEH will electronically submit the project applications and the MS BoS Consolidated CoC Application via e-snaps to HUD.

Any questions about the 2024-2025 CoC Competition Process can be directed to Marika Baliko, Interim Continuum of Care Director, at cocdirector@msbos.org.

MS BALANCE OF STATE 2024-2025 COC COMPETITION TIMELINE

The following is the timeline for the 2024-2025 CoC Competition, including dates and deadlines associated with the project evaluation process.

Competition Timeline	
Date	Event
Friday, July 26th, 2024	Deadline for Letters of Intent to Apply for Competition [due by 4:00 pm CST]
Wednesday, July 31st, 2024	HUD’s Announcement of FY2024 CoC Funding
Thursday, August 22nd, 2024	CoC’s Public Announcement of Local Competition
Thursday, August 29th, 2024	FY2024 Bidder’s Conference @ 10 am VIA ZOOM
Friday, September 6th, 2024	FY2024 Funding Competition Office Hours w/ MSBOS COC @ 10am VIA ZOOM
Wednesday, September 25th, 2024	Project Application Submission Deadline (due in e-SNAPS). Three days following the deadline will be used for a review of projects and requests for corrections if needed.
Thursday, October 3rd, 2024	Rank and Review Committee
Monday, October 7th, 2024	Notify rejected/reduced applications
Wednesday, October 9th, 2024	Project and Public Notification of Rank and Review
Friday, October 25th, 2024	Post for Public Review
Monday, October 28th, 2024	MS BoS CoC’s HUD Application Submission

APPENDIX A: WHAT IS HOUSING FIRST???

Housing First is a model of housing assistance that centers on providing people experiencing homelessness with housing as quickly as possible, and then providing services as needed. Assistance is offered without preconditions or service participation requirements.

Housing First programs share critical elements:

- A focus on helping individuals and families access and sustain permanent housing as quickly as possible without time limits
- A variety of services delivered to promote housing stability and individual well-being on an as-needed basis
- A standard lease agreement – housing is not contingent on compliance with services

Additionally, Housing First programs should actively work to ensure there are minimum barriers to entering their programs, particularly for those most in need. For example, Housing First programs should not require sobriety as a condition of housing, they should not require drug testing, and they should not require a minimum level of income.

Additional information about Housing First practices can be found at the following links.

- http://www.endhomelessness.org/pages/housing_first
- http://usich.gov/usich_resources/solutions/explore/housing_first
- <http://www.desc.org/housingfirst.html>

APPENDIX B: COORDINATED ENTRY

An effective coordinated entry process is a critical component to any community's efforts to meet the goals of *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. This policy brief describes HUD's views of the characteristics of an effective coordinated entry process. This brief does not establish requirements for Continuums of Care (CoCs), but rather is meant to inform local efforts to further develop CoCs' coordinated entry processes.

Provisions in the CoC Program interim rule at 24 CFR 578.7(a)(8) require that CoCs establish a *Centralized or Coordinated Assessment System*. In this document, HUD uses the terms *coordinated entry* and *coordinated entry process* instead of *centralized or coordinated assessment system* to help avoid the implication that CoCs must centralize the assessment process, and to emphasize that the process is easy for people to access, that it identifies and assesses their needs, and makes prioritization decisions based upon needs. However, HUD considers these terms to mean the same thing. See 24 CFR 578.7(a)(8) for information on current requirements.

HUD's primary goals for coordinated entry processes are that assistance be allocated as effectively as possible and that it be easily accessible no matter where or how people present. Most communities lack the resources needed to meet all of the needs of people experiencing homelessness. This combined with the lack of well-developed coordinated entry processes can result in severe hardships for people experiencing homelessness. They often face long waiting times to receive assistance or are screened out of needed assistance. Coordinated entry processes help communities prioritize assistance based on vulnerability and severity of service needs to ensure that people who need assistance the most can receive it in a timely manner. Coordinated entry processes also provide information about service needs and gaps to help communities plan their assistance and identify needed resources.

To learn more about the qualities and aspects of Coordinated Entry, download HUD's Coordinated Entry Brief:

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/4427/coordinated-entry-policy-brief/>