



CoC Governance: Identifying and Evaluating your Collaborative Applicant

Introduction and Purpose

This Continuum of Care (CoC) Governance Quick Guide provides a brief overview of CoC roles & responsibilities, focusing on the identification, recruitment, and monitoring of a Collaborative Applicant, and is intended as a supplement to the CoC Governance Toolkit.

CoC Roles & Responsibilities Overview

The CoC consists of three main groups with distinct roles and responsibilities: the CoC Body or Membership, the CoC Governance Board (the Board), and the CoC Collaborative Applicant (formerly known as the Lead Agency). All three groups play critical roles in the CoC and must work collaboratively to end homelessness in their communities. A brief summary of each group is defined below.

The CoC Body is made up of members consisting of a diverse group of community organizations and individuals, including those with lived experience and expertise of homelessness, who provide advocacy, services, and/or support to people at risk of or experiencing homelessness in the CoCs geographic area. They play a critical role in the CoCs work by engaging in planning and prioritization for delivering services and programs to individuals and families experiencing homelessness, and by participating in the CoCs planning and decision-making processes. The CoC must also comply with HUD's requirements for administering grant funds. Some primary responsibilities of the CoC include:

- Designating a Collaborative Applicant to coordinate and submit the CoC application,
- Designating an eligible applicant to operate HMIS (Homeless Management Information System),
- Attending membership meetings and fulfilling voting responsibilities,
- Approving the Governance Charter.

The Board is responsible for overseeing the CoCs planning and decision-making processes. The Board must include persons with lived experience and expertise of homelessness and ensure that the CoCs activities align with HUD's requirements and the CoCs goals and objectives. The Boards responsibilities are defined by the CoC and must be described in the CoCs governance charter. The Board must be representative of the relevant organizations and of projects serving homeless populations and subpopulations within the CoCs geographic area and ensure that the CoC is engaging with and involving persons with lived experience and expertise of homelessness in its planning and decision-making processes. Primary responsibilities of the CoC Governance Board include:

- Providing oversight and governance on behalf of the CoC, and
- Implementing rules for governance, membership, committee structure, monitoring, and other areas required to fulfill its responsibilities via the CoC Governance Charter.

The Collaborative Applicant is responsible for submitting the CoCs application for funding to The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). They lead the planning and coordination efforts to develop the CoCs application and must ensure that it meets HUD's requirements. The Collaborative Applicant serves as the primary point of contact with HUD and is responsible for managing the CoCs grant funds. Primary responsibilities of the Collaborative Applicant include:

- Applying for CoC and/or UFA (Unified Funding Agency) Planning funds,
- Coordinating and submitting the annual application to HUD for CoC program funding, and

- Coordinating and administering the activities and responsibilities of the CoC as specified in the Governance Charter.

This document will focus on the identification and evaluation of an effective Collaborative Applicant.

Qualities of an effective Collaborative Applicant

The Collaborative Applicant is responsible for submitting the CoCs funding application to HUD and coordinating the planning and implementation of the CoCs strategic plan. As such, identifying an effective Collaborative Applicant should be a carefully considered decision within the CoC. Ideal Collaborative Applicants should possess the following qualities:

- **Commitment to equity and inclusion:** Collaborative Applicants should be committed to equity and inclusion and have a strong understanding of the factors that contribute to homelessness, including systemic racism, poverty, and discrimination. They should also be committed to including the voices of lived experience and expertise in homelessness in decision-making and serving all populations experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including those with disabilities, LGBTQ+ individuals, and Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC).
- **Strong leadership skills:** Collaborative Applicants should possess strong listening, negotiating, and leadership skills to effectively manage the CoCs strategic plan and coordinate with other partners. This includes the ability to communicate effectively, facilitate collaboration and cooperation among diverse groups, project manage multiple complex activities, and manage conflict.
- **Knowledge of HUD regulations:** Collaborative Applicants should possess a strong understanding of, and fidelity to, HUD regulations and requirements to effectively manage the CoCs grant funding. This includes knowledge of the CoC Program Interim Rule and other relevant HUD policies and guidelines.
- **Experience with grant management:** Collaborative Applicants should have successful experience managing grants and other funding sources to effectively oversee the CoCs grant funding. This includes experience with grant writing, fiscal management, and reporting.
- **Familiarity with the local community:** Collaborative Applicants should have a strong understanding of the local community and the needs of populations experiencing homelessness in their area. This includes knowledge of local service providers, community resources, and other partners.

Collaborative Applicant Recruitment & selection

Identifying and recruiting an effective Collaborative Applicant is critical to the success of the CoC. To identify and recruit an effective Collaborative Applicant, CoC Boards should consider the following best practices:

- **Engage diverse partners:** CoC Boards should engage a diverse group of partners in the selection process to ensure that the Collaborative Applicant is representative of the CoCs community and can effectively coordinate the needs of all populations experiencing homelessness. Partners must include persons with lived experience and expertise of homelessness, service providers, advocates, policy makers, and other pertinent sectors in the community.
- **Conduct a needs assessment:** Before identifying potential Collaborative Applicants, CoC Boards should conduct a needs assessment to determine what qualities and experience are needed in a Collaborative Applicant. This assessment can help identify the skills and expertise required to effectively manage the CoCs strategic plan and HUD grant funding. Ensure the needs

assessment looks at qualities and experience needed to fulfill all the responsibilities outlined in your local CoC Governance Charter.

- **Utilize a transparent selection process:** To ensure that the Collaborative Applicant is selected based on merit and not personal connections or biases, the selection process should be transparent and clearly communicated to all interested parties. This process should include criteria for selection, such as experience with grant management, familiarity with HUD regulations, and knowledge of the CoCs local community, among other locally determined factors.
- **Provide training and technical assistance:** Once the Collaborative Applicant is selected, the CoC Board should ensure the Collaborative Applicant staff have ongoing access to training and technical assistance to ensure they are prepared to effectively manage the CoCs strategic plan and administer the allocation of HUD funding. This should include training in compliance with HUD regulations, grant management, and community engagement.

Incorporating Collaborative Applicant Expectations into the Governance Charter

The CoC Governance Charter, and any accompanying documents, serves as the governing document for the CoC, outlining the roles and responsibilities of CoC members, the CoC Governance Board, the HMIS lead agency, and the Collaborative Applicant. Accompanying documents may include Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), checklists, template documents, etc. To ensure that the Collaborative Applicant can effectively carry out its responsibilities, it is important to include specific expectations in the Governance Charter.

Some recommendations for including these expectations in the Governance Charter include:

1. **Clearly defining the role of the Collaborative Applicant:** The Governance Charter should include a clear description of the Collaborative Applicant's role and responsibilities, including its responsibility for submitting the CoCs application for funding to HUD, and coordinating the planning and implementation of the CoCs strategic plan.
2. **Outlining the qualifications for the Collaborative Applicant:** The Governance Charter should include a description of the qualifications necessary for the Collaborative Applicant, including knowledge of compliance with HUD regulations, experience with grant management, incorporation of persons with lived experience and expertise in homelessness, working with diverse populations, and familiarity with the local community.
3. **Establishing performance expectations:** The Governance Charter should establish specific performance expectations for the Collaborative Applicant, including requirements for timely and accurate submission of grant applications and reports, and compliance with all relevant HUD regulations and policies.
4. **Defining the Collaborative Applicant's relationship with the CoC Governance Board:** The Governance Charter should clarify the relationship between the Collaborative Applicant and the CoC Governance Board, including the Collaborative Applicant's responsibility to report regularly to the Board on the CoCs progress in achieving its strategic plan.
5. **Providing for ongoing evaluation and feedback:** The Governance Charter should include provisions for ongoing evaluation and feedback on the performance of the Collaborative Applicant, including regular performance reviews, listening sessions with people with lived experience and expertise of homelessness and diverse communities, and opportunities for input from CoC members and other community partners.

Examples of Collaborative Applicant expectations that could be included in the Governance Charter might include:

- The Collaborative Applicant will have a strong understanding of HUD regulations and requirements and will maintain compliance with all relevant regulations and policies.
- The Collaborative Applicant will work collaboratively with persons with lived experience and expertise of homelessness, CoC members, service providers, community organizations, and other partners to develop and implement the CoCs strategic plan.
- The Collaborative Applicant will be responsible for timely and accurate submission of all grant applications and required reports to HUD (the Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR), Point in Time Count (PIT), Housing Inventory Count (HIC), etc.).
- The Collaborative Applicant will report regularly to the CoC Governance Board on the progress of the CoC in achieving its strategic goals and will seek input and feedback from CoC members and other partners regularly.

In addition to including general expectations of the Collaborative Applicant in the Governance Charter, it can be helpful to outline more specific requirements in a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). While the Governance Charter provides a general framework for how the CoC will be governed, the MOU can outline specific expectations and requirements for the Collaborative Applicant to ensure that they are meeting the expectations of the CoC Governance Board and provide a framework for monitoring performance. An MOU could outline the roles of the Collaborative Applicant and CoC Board, decision-making processes and what decisions can be made by the Collaborative Applicant and what decisions need Board approval, performance metrics, timelines for completion of activities, process steps for performance improvement activities and the process for removing the Collaborative Applicant, if necessary.

Some recommendations for including CoC Collaborative Applicant expectations in an MOU include:

- **Timelines:** The MOU should outline specific timelines for submitting required documentation and meeting other CoC deadlines. This ensures that the Collaborative Applicant is held accountable for their responsibilities.
- **Reporting Requirements:** The MOU should outline what information the Collaborative Applicant is required to report to the CoC Governance Board and the CoC. This could include, but is not limited to, data on the number of individuals served, progress towards goals, system performance measures, feedback from community listening sessions, and budget information.
- **Performance Expectations:** The MOU should outline specific performance expectations for the Collaborative Applicant, such as meeting performance targets, monitoring of recipients/subrecipients to ensure quality programs and services, and collaborating effectively with other CoC members.
- **Compliance with Regulations:** The MOU should include language requiring the Collaborative Applicant to comply with all applicable regulations and guidelines related to the CoC, such as those related to data collection and reporting.
- **Financial Accountability:** The MOU should outline the financial responsibilities of the Collaborative Applicant, including budgeting, reporting, and compliance with CoC financial requirements.

Note that some expectations and requirements may be more appropriate for inclusion in the Governance Charter versus the MOU. For example, the Governance Charter should include a general expectation that the Collaborative Applicant will comply with all CoC regulations and guidelines, while the MOU may outline specific requirements related to data collection and reporting.

Monitoring a Collaborative Applicant

Monitoring the performance of the CoC Collaborative Applicant is a key aspect of the CoC Governance process. The Board must have a clear and effective process in place to ensure that the Collaborative Applicant is meeting the expectations outlined in the CoC Governance Charter and MOU.

Regular Check-Ins. One effective process for monitoring a CoC Collaborative Applicant is to establish regular check-ins and reporting requirements. The Board should require the Collaborative Applicant to provide regular updates on their progress towards meeting the goals and outcomes identified in the MOU. These updates could take the form of progress reports, financial reports, or other relevant documentation. The Board should also schedule regular meetings with the Collaborative Applicant to discuss progress and address any issues or concerns that arise.

Community Feedback. Another important aspect of monitoring the Collaborative Applicant is to establish a system for collecting feedback from persons with lived experience and expertise of homelessness, diverse community members, and partners. The Board should solicit feedback from persons with lived experience and expertise of homelessness, diverse communities, CoC Members and other partners and community members who work with the Collaborative Applicant to understand how the Collaborative Applicant is performing and where improvements can be made. This feedback can be used to inform the Board's monitoring process and to provide the Collaborative Applicant with guidance on how to improve their performance.

To ensure that the monitoring process is effective, the Board should establish clear consequences for non-compliance with the expectations outlined in the Governance Charter and MOU. These consequences should be outlined in the MOU and should be consistently applied to all Collaborative Applicants. Consequences could include sanctions or even termination of the MOU if the Collaborative Applicant fails to meet the outlined expectations.

To effectively monitor a CoC Collaborative Applicant, it is important to establish a clear process that includes the following elements:

- **Timing and timeframe:** The monitoring process should be conducted at regular intervals, such as semi-annually, annually or every two years. The time of year is important to consider, ensuring that it is not at the same time as the CoC competition or other major reporting periods. The specific timing and timeframe should be clearly defined in the CoC Governance Charter and MOU.
- **CoC participation:** The monitoring process should involve participation from a range of partners, including persons with lived experience and expertise of homelessness, the CoC Governance Board, CoC members, and other key partners. This ensures that all parties have a say in the process and can provide feedback on the Collaborative Applicant's performance.
- **Decision-making authority:** The Governance Charter should clearly specify the decision-making authority and process for any actions or recommendations resulting from the monitoring process.
- **Step-by-Step process:** The monitoring process should be conducted in sequential steps, with each step building on the previous one. This includes:
 - **Review of performance metrics:** The monitoring process should begin with a review of the Collaborative Applicant's performance metrics, as outlined in the CoC Governance Charter and/or MOU. These metrics should be specific and measurable and should include both quantitative and qualitative indicators.
 - **Site visit:** Following the review of performance metrics, a site visit should be conducted to assess the Collaborative Applicant's operations and programs. The site visit should be

conducted by a team of relevant partners, including persons with lived experience and expertise of homelessness, CoC members, and representatives from the CoC Governance Board.

- **Report and recommendations:** Based on the review of performance metrics and the site visit, a report should be generated that includes specific recommendations for improvement and areas of strength. If areas of improvement are identified, a timeline for follow-up by the Collaborative Applicant and Board should be included.
- **Follow-up and evaluation:** Finally, the CoC Governance Board should follow up with the Collaborative Applicant to ensure that all recommended improvements have been implemented and should conduct a timely follow-up evaluation to assess the effectiveness of these improvements.

By establishing a clear and comprehensive process for monitoring a Collaborative Applicant, the Governance Board can ensure that the Collaborative Applicant is meeting its expectations and contributing to the overall success of the CoC.

Tools and Resources

CoC Governance Resources:

- <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/1718/continuum-of-care-governance-and-management/>
- <https://www.hudexchange.info/trainings/courses/coc-program-understanding-the-role-of-the-collaborative-applicant-webinar/>
- <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/3114/coc-governance-charter/>
- <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5786/how-to-govern-geographically-diverse-cocs-leading-by-providing-a-regional-voice/>
- <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/toolkit/responsibilities-and-duties/>
- <https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/2033/hearth-coc-program-interim-rule/>
- https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/comm_planning/coc/training
- <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/tribal-communities/>

Definitions:

Continuum of Care (CoC)

The HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) is a program established by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to address homelessness and carry out the responsibilities outlined in the [CoC Program Interim Rule](#) for a defined geographic area.

The CoC program is designed to provide a seamless system of care that supports households to move from homelessness to permanent housing as quickly and efficiently as possible. The CoC is managed by local agencies, coalitions of organizations, and individuals responsible for coordinating and implementing the program in their community. The CoC brings together community representatives including: persons with lived experience and expertise of homelessness, nonprofit service providers, victim service providers, faith-based organizations, governments, tribal communities, businesses, advocates, public housing agencies, school districts, social service providers, mental health agencies, hospitals, universities, affordable housing developers, law enforcement, organizations that serve homeless and formerly homeless veterans, and other partners, to provide a range of services and housing options for individuals and families at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

CoC Governance

CoC Governance refers to the system of management, structure, and decision-making processes used by local agencies and organizations responsible for implementing the CoC program in their community. This includes the development and implementation of comprehensive plans to address homelessness, management of the allocation of HUD funding to local programs and services, and the monitoring and evaluation of program effectiveness.

At the core of CoC Governance is the CoC Governance Board (the Board), which consists of a collective of individuals elected by and serving on behalf of the CoC, responsible for overseeing and implementing the CoC program in their community. The Board must be representative of the relevant organizations and of projects serving homeless subpopulations within the CoC geographic area and must include at least one person with lived experience and expertise of homelessness.

Effectively structured CoC Governance ensures that local agencies and organizations are working together in a coordinated and effective manner to address homelessness in their community.

CoC Governance Charter

The CoC Governance Charter outlines the structure and processes of the Board. The charter serves as a guide for the CoC membership, Board, work groups, and designated entities, providing clear expectations for their roles and responsibilities and outlining the procedures and protocols they must follow to ensure effective CoC program management. The primary requirements of a CoC Governance Charter include:

- **CoC membership and structure:** The charter must outline how individuals and organizations can become members of the CoC, how voting privileges are obtained and maintained, and the frequency of meetings.
- **Board membership and structure:** The charter must outline the board's membership and structure. This includes specifying the number of members, the types of organizations represented, and any requirements for board membership, such as a minimum level of experience or expertise in the field of homelessness. The charter must also outline how Board members are recruited and approved and how board member terms are determined including any term limits.
- **Roles and responsibilities:** The charter must clearly define the roles and responsibilities of the board, members, Collaborative Applicant and HMIS lead agency, including the development and implementation of the strategic plan, allocation of HUD funding, monitoring and evaluation of program effectiveness, and coordination and collaboration with local agencies and organizations.
- **Decision-making processes:** The charter must outline the decision-making processes used by the board, including how decisions are made, who has the authority to make decisions, and how conflicts are resolved.
- **Conflict of interest policies:** The charter must include policies and procedures for addressing conflicts of interest among board members and ensuring that decisions are made in the best interest of the CoC and the local homeless population.
- **Evaluation and improvement:** The charter must include a process for evaluating the effectiveness of the CoC program, the board, the HMIS lead agency and the Collaborative Applicant, as well as a plan for continuous improvement based on evaluation findings.

In addition to these primary requirements, the Governance Charter may also include other details, such as meeting schedules, work group structure, communication protocols, and procedures for adding or removing board members, including ensuring representation on the board from persons with lived

expertise of homelessness.

The Governance Charter provides the structure and guidance necessary for local CoCs to effectively implement the CoC program and coordinate the homeless response system in their community.

Centering Equity in CoC Governance

Centering equity in CoC governance is paramount to ensure that the homeless response system is effective and equitable for all community members, including those experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless. To do so, CoCs must engage in a deliberate and intentional process that involves several key steps.

- Ensure that the board is diverse and representative of the community it serves. This includes recruiting members from a range of organizations and backgrounds, including those who have experience and expertise of homelessness or are from historically marginalized communities.
- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the local population of persons experiencing homelessness to identify the specific needs and barriers faced by different groups. This includes conducting surveys and focus groups, analyzing data on homelessness in the community, and engaging with community-based organizations and other partners, including persons with lived experience and expertise of homelessness.
- Using the information gathered through the assessment, the CoC can then develop a strategic plan that prioritizes equity and addresses the specific needs of marginalized groups. This may include strategies to address systemic barriers to housing, such as discriminatory housing practices or lack of affordable housing and services in certain neighborhoods.
- Ensure that the allocation of HUD funding is equitable and that resources are directed to programs and services that serve those who are most in need. This may include programs that provide wraparound services, such as mental health care or substance abuse treatment, or those that provide support for people with disabilities or other special needs.
- Importantly, the board must continuously monitor and evaluate the homeless response system and programs to ensure they remain equitable and effective over time. This includes collecting and analyzing data on program outcomes, engaging with community members and partners to gather feedback, and adjusting as needed to address any disparities or inequities that arise.

By centering equity in their work, CoCs can help ensure that their programs and services are effective and equitable for all members of the community. By prioritizing the needs of marginalized groups and addressing systemic barriers to housing and services, communities can help to reduce homelessness and increase access to stable, affordable housing for all. Additionally, by engaging with diverse community members and organizations, the CoC can build trust and partnerships to sustain the program over time.

Resources to Center Equity:

- **The HUD Exchange** has a variety of tools and resources to assist CoCs in centering equity:
 - [CoC Analysis Tool: Race and Ethnicity](#)
 - <https://www.hudexchange.info/trainings/courses/centering-racial-equity-in-the-work-to-end-homelessness-aligning-vision-with-practice/>
 - [Advancing Racial Equity and Fair Housing Learning Brief](#)
- **The National Alliance to End Homelessness** has developed a [racial equity toolkit for CoCs](#) that includes a range of resources and tools to help CoCs integrate equity into their work.
- **The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH)** developed a [Racial Disparities and Disproportionality Index](#) (“RDDI”) that looks at 16 unique systems and measures whether a

racial and/or ethnic group's representation in a particular public system is proportionate to, over or below their representation in the overall population (proportionality).

- **The National Health Care for the Homeless Council** produced a fact sheet that addresses [Health, Homelessness, and Racial Disparities](#).
- **C4 Innovations** developed several [products sharing guidance for advancing racially equitable homeless systems](#) are available to HUD grantees and their communities.

Disclaimer:

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