



Opening Doors

Policy and Procedures for Requests for Proposals

Policy Statement

Opening Doors Northwest Florida is committed to ensuring a fair, transparent, and efficient process for soliciting and evaluating proposals from potential project applicants for DCF State Unified and HUD CoC Competitions. This policy outlines the procedures for issuing requests for proposals (RFPs), evaluating submissions, and selecting projects for implementation.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

1. Provide a clear framework for issuing RFPs.
2. Ensure a standardized approach to proposal evaluation.
3. Promote transparency and fairness in the selection of project applicants.

Scope

This policy applies to all departments and units within Opening Doors Northwest Florida that seek to procure services, products, or solutions through project proposals.

Definitions

- **Request for Proposal (RFP):** A formal document issued to solicit proposals from potential vendors or independent contractors for a specific project.
- **Proposal:** A detailed submission by a potential applicant outlining how they intend to address the requirements outlined in the RFP.
- **Project Applicant:** An organization that applies for a grant project but has not yet been awarded.

Policy and Procedures

Pre-Planning

To establish a systematic approach for pre-planning RFPs to ensure efficient, effective and compliant procurement and selection processes, the CoC will formulate a team of stakeholders with assigned roles, relevant expertise, and responsibilities. This team will establish regular meetings and updates among the team members to prepare for RFPs on an ad-hoc basis.

- Contact current Project Review and Ranking Committee members to determine ongoing participation for the current fiscal year.
- Solicit for new Project Review and Ranking Committee members, if necessary.
- Review and update the annual CoC Plan and strategic priorities with the CoC Board.
- Organize an RFP Workgroup to assist in writing, consolidating, and reviewing the proposal guide.
- Host a training session for new and returning Project Review and Ranking Committee members, and the RFP Workgroup.

Preparing the RFP

The RFP must include a clear project description, objectives, scope of work, deliverables, timeline, budget, evaluation criteria, and submission guidelines. It is the responsibility of the CoC Board, Committees, and Workgroups to participate in the development of RFP content before issuance of the RFP.

- Identify the need for the RFP and draft the project scope and requirements.
- Prepare and finalize the RFP guide, local application materials, and scoring and project evaluation tools with input from the relevant key stakeholders.
- Submit the finalized guide, materials, and tools to the CoC Board or Executive Committee for approval.

Issuance of RFPs

Issuing an RFP is a strategic decision made by organizations to solicit bids from vendors and select independent contractors for specific projects or services. It is both the organizational policy of Opening Doors and a HUD regulatory requirement to ensure compliance and fairness in procurement processes. RFPs are issued for projects requiring specialized expertise, services, and products and must be approved by the CoC Board before release. When an RFP is issued, specific steps must be followed.

- Post and distribute the funding announcement from HUD or DCF.

- Publish the RFP through appropriate channels (e.g., organization website, industry portals).
- Distribute CoC priorities set by the CoC Board at the time funding is announced.

Public Education

The community must understand and prepare before submitting proposals in response to RFPs. It is equally important that applicants that take the necessary steps to align themselves to apply and join the CoC membership receive benefits for their effort. Thus, it is to the advantage of the CoC that it offers public education to promote clear understanding, enhance the quality of proposals, and promote transparency and equal access to information for the public.

- Host a community-wide workshop open to the public before the local submission system opens.
- Provide training and TA sessions to all organizations who have submitted an LOI and have registered for CoC Membership to best prepare them for project application.
- Advertise webinars and other learning opportunities are available through the CoC Constant Contact, Membership, CoC Board, Committees, and Workgroup distribution lists as well as other community partner distribution lists.

Proposal Submission

The RFP process aims to promote competition, better pricing, innovative solutions, and improved quality. RFPs typically have a structured format for responses, including a letter of intent, project application, and support documentation. The letter of intent will be complete by Google Form. Proposals must meet specified standards and deadlines, and late submissions are generally not considered unless an extension has been granted.

- Proposals must be submitted via a secure method, including letters of intent and attachments
- The CoC Lead will send confirmation of the receipt via email.
- Completion of the proposal checklist to ensure project applications meet submission requirements.

Evaluation and Selection Process

Proposals will be evaluated based on qualifications, experience, budget, and adherence to the CoC strategic plan. The evaluation will be conducted by the Project Review and Ranking Committee (PRRC), which comprises members with relevant experience to ensure a fair and objective assessment. The PRRC aims to enhance the quality and integrity of the CoC's procurement process by leveraging collective knowledge and judgment.

The evaluation and selection process is outlined in the CoC Project Review and Ranking Policy.

Selection Notification

The selection of the project applicant will be based on the evaluation results by the PRRC and the best fit for the project's needs. The selected applicant will be notified in writing, and unsuccessful applicants will receive notification as well.

- The Lead Agency will send a notification letter to selected applicants.
- The Lead Agency will send notification letters to unsuccessful applicants with the option for feedback.
- The Lead Agency will send a notification of the ranking and project listing to the CoC Board.
- The CoC Board will review the notification letter and approve the competition results. If the CoC Board cannot reach a consensus on certifying the competition results, the Executive Committee will do so.
- The certified competition results will be posted publicly on the CoC Website and distributed to the Membership, Committees, Workgroups, and other community partner distribution lists.

Confidentiality

All proposals and evaluation documents are confidential and will only be shared with individuals involved in the evaluation process until the competition has been certified by the CoC Board.

This means that no person involved or knowledgeable of the evaluation process will discuss proposals with applicants, CoC Members, CoC Board, or others before certification of the competition. PRRC members will need to sign a confidentiality agreement annually.

Conflict of Interest

Individuals involved in the RFP process must disclose any potential conflicts of interest and recuse themselves from evaluation or certification, if necessary.

Post-Selection and Feedback

Applicants may request feedback on their proposal following the selection process from the PRRC members. In addition, the CoC Lead Agency will work to finalize and sign contracts with the selected applications. Lastly, the PRRC will present a debriefing, including challenges and any process improvements recommended for future RFPs.

Responsibilities

CoC Lead Agency: Provide guidance on the RFP preparation and ensure compliance with organizational policies.

Project Review and Ranking Committee (PRRC): CoC Members who review, score, and recommend proposals based on evaluation criteria.

RFP Workgroup: Develop, oversee, and review the RFP guide and materials.

CoC Board: The representative body of the CoC that approves the RFP guide, materials, strategic plan, and project applicant selection.

Review and Amendments

This policy will be reviewed annually and amended as necessary to ensure it remains effective and relevant. Changes will be communicated to all stakeholders.

Effective Date

This policy is effective as of August 22, 2024, and will remain in effect until revised or replaced.