



North Carolina Balance of State Continuum of Care

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2018 Emergency Solutions Grants Funding Priorities

Purpose

The North Carolina Balance of State Continuum of Care has set funding priorities for its Emergency Solutions Grants programs in 2018 to help improve its homeless system and provide more robust supports to people experiencing homelessness. These funding priorities aim to:

- Help each Local Planning Area (known as Regional Committees in the NC BoS CoC) target ESG funding on specific local needs. These priorities provide guidance to help LPAs make decisions about how to use ESG to improve their local homeless system, rather than simply continuing ESG funding for previous grantees.
- Coordinate goals and ESG funding across the whole CoC. ESG funding decisions are made in each LPA, which makes it difficult for the whole CoC to set and meet goals. These funding priorities aim to coordinate ESG funding to move the whole CoC toward common goals.
- Improve ESG-funded programs. These priorities aim to help move grantees toward best practices by lowering barriers to entry, integrating Housing First practices, and following NC BoS CoC's Written Standards. The NC ESG Office will begin requiring, rather than suggesting, full integration of these practices in the future. These priorities help grantees and communities take steps toward full Housing First implementation.

How to use the NC BoS CoC's 2018 ESG Funding Priorities to set LPA Funding Priorities:

1. Read the following funding priorities in full.
 2. Convene an ESG funding committee in your Local Planning Area.
 3. Use the Local Planning Area ESG Funding Priorities Worksheet to set LPA funding priorities. The worksheet will help LPAs make local choices where these priorities allow LPA flexibility.
 4. Develop a scorecard that helps implement the LPA's priorities or use NCCEH's sample scorecard.
 5. Submit the ESG Funding Priorities Worksheet and the LPA's scorecard (if developing a local scorecard) to NCCEH by August 1, 2018 using [this link](#).
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NC Balance of State Continuum of Care's 2018 ESG Funding Priorities

Ensure everyone in the CoC has access to low-barrier shelter and rapid re-housing financial assistance and services. Homelessness prevention should be funded only in limited circumstances.

- LPAs should only fund additional low-barrier shelter beds in counties where significant numbers of people live unsheltered. All newly funded shelter beds should be low-barrier.
- LPAs should only fund street outreach in counties that currently lack low-barrier shelter and have people living unsheltered.
- LPAs should prioritize funding for currently funded emergency shelters that agree to reduce barriers to entry.
- LPAs should fund rapid re-housing (RRH) programs that cover every county in the LPA.
- LPAs should only fund homelessness prevention programs if low-barrier emergency shelter and rapid re-housing are available in every county. If these goals are met, the LPA may only fund homelessness prevention programs to prevent returns to homelessness among former clients of rapid re-housing or permanent supportive housing programs.

LPAs should apply for all available funding and recruit applicants most likely to receive funding.

- LPAs should advertise ESG funding widely and actively recruit new agencies to apply so there are enough agencies to apply for all available funding. LPAs should recruit new applicants that would help to fill gaps and improve the LPA's response to homelessness.
- LPAs should work with potential new applicants to understand ESG requirements and best practices.
- LPAs should not put agencies forward to the NC ESG Office for funding if they have significant compliance problems or other issues that may prevent them from receiving ESG grants. LPAs should use a scorecard that evaluates applicants for compliance and good standing with the ESG office.

Only applicants with high rates of spending should be funded.

- Agencies with a history of poor spending – those that were in Tier 3 in 2017 and 2018 – should not be funded in the 2018 ESG competition.
- LPAs should consider reducing funding for agencies that struggle to spend all their funding but have not fallen into Tier 3 in 2017 and 2018.

LPAs should give priority to programs that have integrated best practices, including low-barriers to entry, Housing First, and the NC BoS CoC's Written Standards.

- Only agencies that are working to lower barriers, implement Housing First principles, and follow the NC BoS CoC's Written Standards should be funded in 2018. Agencies should be integrating these principles and practices into their policies and procedures.

- LPAs should use the guide in the appendix, below, to help make decisions about which agencies to fund. LPAs should use a scorecard that evaluates agencies' adherence to best practices.
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Appendix: Best practices by activity type

Priority for Low-Barrier, Housing First Emergency Shelters

All emergency shelters must follow the [NC BoS CoC's Emergency Shelter Written Standards](#).

Emergency shelters should have low-barriers to entry, voluntary and housing-focused services, and facilitate rapid exits to permanent housing.

Principle 1: Low-Barriers to Entry

Anyone experiencing homelessness should be able to access emergency shelter without prerequisites.

- Shelters should provide immediate and easy access by staying open 24/7.
- Shelters should NOT require sobriety, income, proof of identification, or put in place other barriers to entry.
- Shelters should NOT conduct criminal background checks and prevent people from entering the shelter with histories of incarceration or arrest. Shelters may check the sex offender registry, if the shelter facility also houses children.
- Shelters should not prevent people from re-entering shelter after leaving. There should be no time limit on the total amount of time someone may stay in the shelter.
- Shelters should not ban people for reasons other than egregious threats to safety of other shelter residents or shelter staff.
- Program rules and expectations should focus only on health and safety. Participation in chores, groups, religious services, or paying rent, for example, should not be requirements to stay in the shelter.

Principle 2: Voluntary, housing-focused services

Services should focus on moving people quickly into permanent housing and reducing exits to homelessness.

- Services should be voluntary. Failure to participate in services should not be a reason to exit a person from the shelter.
- Services should focus on helping people identify safe, accessible, permanent housing solutions from their first day in shelter. Every case management conversation should relate to permanent housing.
- Housing-focused services should include helping residents make connections to mainstream housing and income resources and working with the coordinated entry system.
- Services should not require residents to participate in certain services or meet prerequisites prior to moving into permanent housing.

- Shelters should track lengths of time homeless and returns to homelessness to help evaluate the effectiveness of their program.

Priority for Low-Barrier, Housing-First Rapid Re-housing Programs

All rapid re-housing programs must follow the [NC BoS CoC's Rapid Re-housing Written Standards](#).

Rapid re-housing programs should have low-barriers to entry, provide hands-on housing identification services, flexible financial assistance, and housing stability services.

Principle 1: Low-barriers to entry

Anyone experiencing homelessness should be able to access rapid re-housing financial assistance and services.

- Rapid re-housing programs should not refuse to serve anyone due to criminal background, substance use history, disability, income, or other real or perceived barriers to finding or maintaining stable housing.
- Rapid re-housing programs should assume all clients are ready for housing and should not withhold financial assistance or services if clients do not meet pre-requisites.

Principle 2: Active Housing Search Assistance

All programs should have dedicated staff whose responsibility is to actively assist tenants with housing search and assertively recruit landlords.

- Housing staff should call landlords, visit properties with clients, and advocate for their clients during the housing search.
- Housing staff should assist clients to overcome barriers to housing by helping them acquire identification, background checks, and other necessary documents.
- Housing staff should assist clients to find housing that they find desirable in neighborhoods they want to live in.
- Rapid re-housing programs should not expect clients to find suitable housing with minimal assistance, such as only providing clients a list of landlords to call themselves.

Principle 3: Flexible Financial Assistance and Services Package

Financial assistance and services should adjust based on the tenant's needs. Programs should provide only the assistance necessary to stabilize in permanent housing.

- Rapid re-housing programs should only provide the assistance necessary to help the household quickly move out of homelessness and stabilize in permanent housing. Services and financial assistance should be adjusted to meet households' changing needs.
- Rapid re-housing programs should regularly evaluate the assistance provided and exit households quickly from assistance if they are stable in housing.
- Rapid re-housing programs should NOT provide a set number of months of assistance or other restricted, one-size-fits-all, services or financial assistance packages.

Principle 4: Client-Driven Housing Stability Services

Services should focus on helping clients achieve housing stability, be voluntary, and allow the client to choose the services they need.

- Services provided by rapid re-housing programs should focus on housing stability. If a client desires other assistance, like long-term mental health treatment, rapid re-housing programs should connect them to mainstream services.
- Services should be voluntary. Clients should not be exited from the program for not engaging in services. Rapid re-housing programs should not put additional requirements on clients that are not required of other tenants.
- Services should be client-driven. Clients' choice should drive the type of services they receive.
- Services should be assertive and provided in tenants' homes. Case managers should help identify and address challenges that may put a client's housing at risk. Case managers should continue to provide services and motivate clients even when they seem resistant.

Priority for Effective Street Outreach Programs

All street outreach programs must follow the [NC BoS CoC's Street Outreach Written Standards](#).

Street outreach programs should fill gaps in services, serve unsheltered people with high barriers to receiving services and housing, and rapidly connect clients to emergency services and permanent housing.

Principle 1: Filling Gaps

- The LPA should aim to fund street outreach in counties with unsheltered counts and without shelter options.
- Street outreach programs may be funded instead of shelter in a county where the existing shelter has high barriers.

Principle 2: Targeting People with High Barriers

- Effective street outreach programs should target people with the most barriers to receiving services.
- Street outreach programs should engage anyone living unsheltered, even if they seem resistant to receiving services.

Principle 3: Rapid Connection to Emergency Services and Permanent Housing

- Street outreach programs should focus on meeting emergency needs, such as connecting people living unsheltered with health, mental health, shelter, and other needed services.
- Street outreach programs should facilitate rapid connections to permanent housing through coordinated entry.
- Street outreach programs should not put barriers (such as required services or sobriety requirements) in place before referring and connecting clients to emergency services or permanent housing.

Principle 4: Agency Experience

- Agencies running street outreach programs should have experience working with people living unsheltered, especially people with significant barriers to permanent housing, including people with severe mental illness and substance use disorders.

Priority for Homelessness Prevention Programs That Reduce Returns to Homelessness

All homelessness prevention programs must follow the [NC BoS CoC's Homelessness Prevention Written Standards](#)

LPAs should only fund homeless prevention programs that focus on preventing returns to homelessness and target funding on those at the most-imminent risk of homelessness.

Principle 1: Preventing Returns to Homelessness

- In 2018, LPAs should only fund homelessness prevention if the agency plans to use the funding to prevent returns to homelessness among people who formerly received rapid re-housing or permanent supportive housing assistance.
- Targeting HP on return prevention ensures people who have previously experienced homelessness are not re-traumatized by experiencing subsequent periods of homelessness. It also helps programs serve more people by helping agencies feel comfortable exiting households from programs earlier, knowing they can prevent subsequent returns to homelessness, if necessary.

Principle 2: Targeting

- All HP programs should only provide prevention funding to people who are at imminent risk of homelessness. Case managers should assess the risk of homelessness before providing financial assistance. People with other permanent housing options, other income, or other options to resolve their housing crisis should be served with mediation only.
- HP programs should focus on tenants who need financial assistance and services to maintain stable housing.