



# Sonoma County Continuum of Care

## Request for Proposals (RFP) Management of the Coordinated Entry System

### **Purpose**

The Sonoma County Continuum of Care (CoC) invites submissions from qualified Eligible Applicants to operate a Coordinated Entry System (CES). The resulting contract is intended to be for operations of the CES system for three (3) years with options for annual renewals for each of the next four (4) years, pending legal approval. In any case, contract duration will be three (3) years.

### **Timeline:**

Date	Event
November 2, 2021	Release of RFP
November 2, 2021-December 1, 2021	Q&A period
December 2, 2021 by 5pm.	Responses to RFP due

### **Section 1: Project Background and Funding Information**

The Sonoma County Community Development Commission (SCCDC) is a local governmental agency responsible for administering affordable housing and other programs in Sonoma County, CA. The SCCDC serves as the host agency for the Sonoma County Continuum of Care (CoC) and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and is the recipient of the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Project Number CA1173L9T041200, under which the Coordinated Entry System Project is funded. Thus, the SCCDC, on behalf of the Sonoma County Continuum of Care, is seeking respondents—either a single agency or a collaborative with a single lead agency—to implement a combined project including Coordinated Entry.

Respondents may be aware that a recent CoC RFP for CES noted that funding for the annual operations of the CES was set at \$349,991 annually. The CoC did not receive any specific responses to the RFP, and some prospective proposers noted that the funding available was insufficient to provide a robust Coordinated Entry program. As such, the CoC Board on October 27<sup>th</sup> asked that this RFP be re-issued, and that respondents could instead propose what respondents would charge to provide CE services as described in the Scope of Services.

As information only, funding of \$349,991 per year (estimated) is available for the operation of the Coordinated Entry system program through Sonoma County's Continuum of Care funding. We anticipate that this amount will be available in subsequent years assuming performance goals are met. However, and as noted in the previous paragraph, if an applicant believes that these are not sufficient funds to carry out the responsibilities listed in this RFP, respondents are encouraged to state how much funding would be needed to successfully carry out the operation of CES. The CoC Board, the County of Sonoma, and other agencies will consider adding to the designated CoC funds to enable the management of an effective CE system.

CoC funds are governed by their own set of federal rules and regulations as published in the HUD 24 CFR §578, the Continuum of Care Program Interim Rule:

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/CoCProgramInterimRule.pdf>. The selected vendor must enter into a contract with the Continuum of Care via the Lead Agency, Sonoma County Community Development Commission, upon selection as the CES operator.

**Eligible Applicants:**

Eligible applicants may include private nonprofit organizations, or State or local government entities or instrumentalities. Coordinated Entry services will be made available county-wide to homeless individuals and homeless families with children in order to meet the HUD mandate that the centralized system serve the Continuum of Care's entire geography.

**Coordinated Entry Requirements:**

The Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009 included a requirement that all local homeless Continuums of Care (CoCs) establish a centralized or coordinated entry point into the local homeless system of care.

On July 28, 2014, the HUD Office of Community Planning and Development published Notice CPD-14-012 titled "Notice on Prioritizing Persons Experiencing Chronic Homelessness and Other Vulnerable Homeless Persons in Permanent Supportive Housing and Recordkeeping Requirements for Documenting Chronic Homeless Status," (<http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=14-12cpdn.pdf>). Section IV.A. of the notice reiterates the provisions of 24 CFR 578.7(a)(8) which require that each CoC establish and operate a centralized system to provide initial, comprehensive assessment of the needs of individuals and families for housing services. *The notice identifies a clear priority for permanently housing homeless persons based on the severity of their needs as an individual or family, rather than on a first come, first served basis, and suggests adoption of standardized, evidence-based assessment tools to accomplish this.*

The Sonoma County Coordinated Entry System (CES) prioritizes crucial services such as Rapid Rehousing (RRH), Emergency Shelter (ES), Transitional Housing (TH), and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH). Participants are prioritized in HMIS using the Vulnerability Index -- Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT), unless those presenting for services can be diverted. Currently, CES provides walk-in services with 20 different Access Sites (AS) in all 5 regions of the county. Specialized AS were designed to help support people with a history of domestic violence and those diagnosed HIV/AIDS. The System prioritizes those with the

highest vulnerability, the lengthiest homelessness, highest usages of emergency services, those with disabilities and those who are literally on the streets for all services. Additional prioritization factors for vulnerability are factored into scoring for families and the youth population. The Continuum of Care Board recently formed the Coordinated Entry Advisory Committee (CEA) to oversee the Coordinated Entry System. The Continuum of Care Board will have the final approvals of the recommendations of the CEA Committee, and will assist in the oversight of any contract let under this RFP.

On October 27, 2021, the Sonoma County Continuum of Care Board voted to make the Sonoma County CES a Housing-focused referral system, removing the responsibility of shelter referrals from CES. CES would be responsible only for referrals to Rapid Rehousing (RRH) and Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) and Other Permanent Housing (OPH) programs. In FYs 19-21, CES has averaged approximately 193 referrals each year to housing programs.

<b>Funding Overview</b>	
<b>Funding for FY 2022</b>	<b>Please indicate funding needed to fulfill responsibilities listed in Scope of Work below</b>

**HUD Core Elements**

HUD’s Core Elements for Coordinated Entry are Access, Assessment, Prioritization and Referral. HUD recommends that CoC’s use these concepts to promote a more efficient and effective system of care. HUD’s guidebook for Coordinated Entry’s Core Elements can be found here: <https://files.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Coordinated-Entry-Core-Elements.pdf> The Scoring Matrix for this RFP is broken out into sections for each of the above-mentioned Core Elements. Respondents are encouraged to use the attached guidebook and to respond to this RFP through the lens of the Core Elements.

**Scope of Work:**

The selected provider is responsible for ensuring the Coordinated Entry System is administered in accordance with the requirements of applicable notice(s). In addition to the regulatory and working provisions outlined above and in the background documents, the respondent will explain how they will demonstrate the following. Please respond to the questions in the scope of work in the order that they are listed. **Please number the responses so that they align with the question.**

**Access**

1. Please describe how you will successfully serve clients in all geographic areas of the county and your plan to map all available access points and conduct a gaps analysis.
2. Demonstrate capacity to serve individuals who lack technology and connect them to services.

3. Demonstrate a plan to outreach to and serve special populations including but not limited to: Transitional Aged Youth, Families, LGBTQ+, individuals with severe physical or mental disabilities.
4. Develop a plan to support community partners who will provide access points to the CES system including providing regular, on-going training and technical assistance to access points.

#### Assessment and Prioritization

5. HUD's Coordinated Entry Notice encourages CoCs to adopt a phased assessment approach and states that assessments conducted in different phases should build on each other and limit the frequency with which a participant must repeat a personal story so as to reduce trauma and improve system efficiency. Describe how your agency would implement a phased assessment approach and how you would garner provider buy-in for Diversion and light touch problem solving.

Describe your experience with the Vulnerability Index Service Prioritization Tool (VI-SPDAT) (or experience assessing individuals with service needs), how you plan to manage a comprehensive list of every person in a community experiencing homelessness also known as the By Names List (BNL) for various service modalities, and how you plan to stratify/prioritize the BNL.

#### Referral

6. Demonstrate strong partnerships with local service providers (including Emergency Shelter, Rapid Re-Housing, and Permanent Supportive Housing referral partners) and with City and County medical providers or a plan on how to develop relationships with providers and stakeholders.
7. Describe your plan to create an effective and regular case conferencing meeting of local service providers discuss cases, address barriers to housing, and make decisions about priority, eligibility, enrollment and termination. The selected operator will collaborate with the project to develop a regional by names list and case conferencing capacity.
8. Describe your planned process to match clients to appropriate programs based on eligibility criteria, client preference etc. and make approximately 200 referrals to housing projects in the CoC's jurisdiction in a timely manner.
9. Develop processes to assist clients with acquiring documents that are needed to access housing programs.

#### Evaluation Plan

10. Demonstrate how your organization will use data and other information as a self-evaluation tool to ensure CES is operating well and how you will use that data to inform your decisions.
11. Please provide recent performance metrics for your agency's existing homeless service programs.

### Agency Capacity

12. Complete the attached budget including additional funds that may be leveraged. Demonstrate a plan to seek and leverage outside funding sources (in kind or match).
13. Demonstrate a staffing structure that has the capacity to work with vulnerable populations, has knowledge of or the ability to learn and correctly use the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).
14. Describe your organization's experience operating HUD-funded programs and your history of compliance with HUD regulations and outcome of HUD or local CoC Collaborative Applicant/Lead Agency program audits.
15. Conflict of interest policy. It is preferred that the Sonoma County CES Operator not have a conflict of interest (does not accept referrals from the CES). If the operator does have a conflict, they must demonstrate measures they would put in place to address it.
16. Describe your plan to create an appeals body for denials that is run by a non-conflicted agency/body.
17. Demonstrate financial stability within your organization and your administrative capacity to support expansion to take on the operations of Sonoma County's Coordinated Entry System.

### **Responsibility of the Sonoma County Community Development Commission (SCCDC):**

1. Contract with, and oversee the work of, the selected program operator.
2. Support the Coordinated Entry Program in HMIS and document the HMIS data collection requirements, including management and performance reporting for the Coordinated Intake program.
3. Monitor and evaluate all Coordinated Entry System Project data reporting in HMIS.
4. Monitor program effectiveness and facilitate recommended changes to the scope of work.

### **Other Information:**

Upon submission, all applications shall be treated as confidential documents until the selection process is completed. Once the notice of intent to award is issued by the SCCDC, all submissions shall be deemed of public record. In the event that an applicant desires to claim portions of its submission exempt from disclosure, it is incumbent upon the submitter to clearly identify those portions with the word "Confidential" printed on the top right-hand corner of

each page for which such privilege is claimed, and to clearly identify the information claimed confidential by highlighting, underlining, or bracketing it, etc. Examples of confidential materials include trade secrets. Each page shall be clearly marked and readily separable from the submission in order to facilitate public inspection of the non-confidential portion of the proposal.

The SCCDC will consider a submitter's request for exemptions from disclosure; however, the SCCDC will make its decision based upon applicable laws. An assertion by a submitter that the entire submission, large portions of the submission, or a significant element of the submission, are exempt from disclosure will not be honored and the submission may be rejected as non-responsive. Budget details, deliverables, and terms of payment shall be publicly available regardless of any designation to the contrary.

The SCCDC shall not be liable for any pre-contractual expenses incurred by the respondent or selected contractor. The County of Sonoma shall be held harmless and free of any and all liability, claims or expenses incurred by, or on behalf of any person or organization responding to the Coordinated Entry System RFP.

Any agency or representative of an agency representing a respondent shall not influence or attempt to influence any member of the selection committee, employee of the Sonoma County Community Development Commission or the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, with regard to the acceptance of the RFP submission.

**Scoring Matrix:** see attached

**Response:**

Respondents will be required to submit their responses in writing before 5:00pm on December 2, 2021. Respondents must submit all required documents via email to Thai Hilton with the Sonoma County Community Development Commission at [Thai.Hilton@sonoma-county.org](mailto:Thai.Hilton@sonoma-county.org) or in person at 1440 Guerneville Road, Santa Rosa, CA 95403.

**Attachment:**

1. **Scoring Matrix**