Speaker 1:	Welcome and thank you for joining today's conference special NOFO to address unsheltered and rural homelessness. Before we begin, please ensure you have opened the WebEx participant and chat panels by using the associated icons at the bottom right of your screen. Please note that all audio connections are muted, but you may send in written questions throughout the presentation today. To send a chat, please select everyone from the dropdown menu in the chat panel, type your question and hit enter to send. If you require technical assistance, please send a chat to the event producer. And with that, I'll turn the conference over to Jemine Bryon deputy assistant secretary for Special Needs. Please go ahead.
Jemine Bryon:	Hi, good afternoon, everyone. It's a pleasure to be here with you today. Thank you for joining. My name is Jemine Bryon and I am the deputy assistant secretary for the Office of Special Needs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development. As a deputy assistant secretary, I oversee the office of HIV AIDS housing, which administers the HOPWA program, housing opportunities for persons with HIV AIDS and all of the homeless assistance grants programs, such as the Emergency Solutions Grants, ESG, the continuum of care program and the youth homelessness demonstration programs here at HUD.
	HUD, along with our colleagues at USDA Rural Development, are really excited to host this afternoon's webinar. Over the course of this webinar, staff and our technical assistance providers will walk you through our special notice of funding opportunity to address unsheltered and rural homelessness. This NOFO makes a total of $322 million available to communities, and it includes a specific set aside for rural communities of $54 million.
	The team will talk about the importance of combining resources across federal funders to maximize our ability to serve all communities, especially rural communities. We know that many of you are leaders in your communities, working and serving individuals and families who are low income, housing insecure, and persons experiencing homelessness. Today's webinar will give us an opportunity to talk about HUD funding and connect with you all to build and expand on much needed partnerships and collaboration.
	Preventing and ending homelessness in this nation will require all of us to come together to scale innovation and establish housing and service programs to support movement into permanent housing. HUD is really grateful to work in partnership with Benga, Lauren, and our colleagues at USDA, and with all of you across the country to address homelessness in rural communities. This will be the first of more to come engagement and discussions on the intersection of homelessness in rural communities. You are in great hands today. If you have any questions that don't get answered today, please don't hesitate to reach out to any of us. Again, thank you all for being with us today and I'll turn it over to Ebony Rankin. Ebony?
Ebony Rankin:	Thank you, Jemine. Next slide please. So, you will hear a lot about our continuum of care. So, I will just give you an overview of our continuum of care

program, what we called the COC program. Next slide. Next slide. Okay. So what is a COC, or continuum of care? So, a COC is a group of organizations that carry out responsibilities of our COC interim rule, and it's composed of representatives of various organizations, and to the extent that these groups are represented in a geographic area. So, if a geographic area have these organizations in them, usually they are a part of the COC. And on the screen here, you see a list of types of organizations that are usually in a COC. It's not, exhaustive or all inclusive list. There could be other types of organizations that's also involved as well. And what they would do, they would develop a long-term strategic plan to manage a year round plan and effort, to address the needs of people experiencing homelessness. Out of these organizations. They will select the lead organization that usually serve as the entity responsible for applying for COC funds in the COC program. And next slide.

So what do our COCs do? So the first thing they do, they're responsible for operating and establishing a system to prevent an end homelessness for a defined geographic area. They are charged with operating the COC and that includes selecting lead organization, identifying potential stakeholders, holding their own competition for funds, creating a governance structure, monitoring and measuring their provider performance. They're also charged with designing and operating homelessness management information system, which we call, HMIS, which is a system we use for collecting data on our programs. They are responsible for COC planning. They do get funds for some of this, for strategic planning and establishing their system. And they are ultimately responsible for our continuum of care grants. Next slide.

So, who are our COCs? I told you, what they do, but who are they? So, we have approximately 400 COCs within the US, Puerto Rico, Guam and Mariana Islands. I say approximately 400 because COCs do ... New COCs are created and COCs are able to merge where it's appropriate and it makes sense. And our continuums, they are cities like New York is its own COC, Philadelphia is its own COC. Then you have some COCs that are a mix of city and counties, or just counties. So, they're cities like Cincinnati slash Hamilton County is a COC.

We do have regional continuums that make up several counties there. They're geographically contiguous, they're not spread out. And then you have our balance of state COCs. So, when there are cities and counties that are represented in a state by several COCs, sometimes you have counties that are not. And then the remainder of those counties would form a balance of state COC, so you ... but not every single state has that. So, you have states like Virginia, states like Ohio, that have a balance of state COC, that along with their city and county, individual city and counties continuums.

And then you do have some states that have a statewide COC, where you only have one COC an entire state, and they're responsible for putting the strategic plan together for the entire state. So, states like Montana and Wyoming have one COC that's responsible for the entire state. Next slide.

So our COC program itself, we do have eligible components and eligible costs for our COC program. So, these are what our continuums, our recipients, can use funding for. Permanent housing, so you have two types of permanent housing. You have permanent supportive housing, which assistance will stay with the recipient as long as they meet the requirements. And then rapid rehousing, where they have up a medium-term rental assistance up to 24 months, and then they stay in the housing as long as they're eligible, but they do get assistance up to 24 months. You have transitional housing, also housing that's up to 24 months. You have supportive services only component, where the project may not provide housing, but provide the services to help the participant gain and keep housing. And then you have our HMIS grants. Because we require our programs to use HMIS, we do provide funding for their homelessness management information system.

And so our eligible costs, we do have acquisition rehab new construction, which aren't that common in our program, but they do happen. So, those are eligible costs. You have leasing and rental assistance, which are probably our two biggest costs that we have. Operating, so the cost of operating a building could be ... is eligible cost, depending on what type of grant it is. And supportive services is eligible for all of our grants to have supportive services. HMIS ,I talked about that. Project administrative costs are the costs that are used to administer grants. So, our recipients can get funds to help them administer ... or they do get funds to help them administer their grant. And I said before, because the continuum of care is responsible for planning, we do give them some limited funds to be able to help with their strategic plan.

And then our unified funding agency costs, is just another planning grant that's used for some of our COCs who are also unified funding agencies. That means they just receive all the grant ... One agency receives all the grant money and able to use subrecipients to give those funds out. So, they will receive a planning grant as well called unified funding agency cost. And that is all I have on the COC. It was really quick and dirty on what COCs are and our COC program. So, now I will turn it over to Brett.

Brett Esders: Great. Thanks, Ebony. So, next slide, please. I am going to walk us through the NOFO that we have out right now for publication, that is part of the whole reason that we are doing this webinar. So, as Jemine said earlier, there's approximately 322 million available through what we're calling this special NOFO. And the special NOFO is, the long title, is the supplemental NOFO to address unsheltered and rural homelessness, and it's available ... Part of why did this background on the COC program is to help you understand the framework that this NOFO is running through.

So, it's running on the COC program requirements, it's recaptured money from the COC program that we are recompeting through this NOFO. And there are two set asides in this NOFO. There's 54 and a half million for projects that are requesting funding under the rural set aside, and then 267 and a half million for

projects that are going to be funded underneath the unsheltered homelessness set aside.

COCs had to register in fiscal year 2022. And part of the COC registration process is where the COC tells us what geography they're going to include in their service area, who their collaborative applicant is going to be. Who's responsible for submitting the NOFO on their behalf. And it's where we make sure that there's no COCs that are including the same geography in more than one COC. So, each COC includes a geography and it doesn't duplicate across other COCs. So, a county is only claimed in one jurisdiction or another, or included in one jurisdiction, or one COC or another.

Sid will go over in a little bit, how you qualify to be a project applicant, but project applications, the way it works in our program is those are submitted to the COC and then the COC runs a local competition. They rate and rank projects, and then they submit the projects to HUD along with their application. Grant terms for projects that will be awarded under this NOFA is three years. And the deadline is 8:00 PM Eastern Time on October 20th, 2022. Next slide, please.

Great. So, in all of our NOFOs that come out through our office, we establish policy priorities. And for this NOFO, there are the priorities you see on the screen. Obviously, it is to reduce unsheltered homelessness. There has been an increase unsheltered homelessness across this country since 2016 and this includes in rural areas. There is a focus on providing services and housing in rural areas to reduce homelessness amongst those experiencing unsheltered homelessness, and also those who maybe aren't unsheltered, but are highly vulnerable and have a lot of service needs.

One of the priorities is to provide assistance on tribal lands. Tribes and TDAGs are new eligible applicants under our COC program. And so, we're really trying to engage them and provide assistance on tribal lands, where their geography is included in a COC.

We're really focusing on involving a broad array of stakeholders in the COC's efforts to reduce homelessness. So, as Jemine mentioned, if we're going to end homelessness in this country, we can't do it just through HUD's COC and ESG programs alone. We really need to leverage the experience and the resources of other mainstream service providers, other housing providers, developers. We need to be ensuring that there is a lot of housing available out there to house people experiencing homelessness. We're looking to advance equity and ensure that our programs are not further increasing inequities across the system, and that we're actually increasing equity throughout. And then all of the projects are going to have to use a housing first approach, which for those of you who aren't familiar, in short a housing first approach is that you are providing housing without any preconditions to entry. So, nobody is saying you have to earn a certain income, for example, to be housed, and without any service requirements, once you are housed. So, no requirement to be sober throughout your term of participation in our projects. It's focusing on housing as the

platform to do everything else. So, those are the priorities that this NOFO is supporting. Next slide, please.

And then to get into sort of the nitty gritty of the set asides, we already ... Oh, nope. Oh yeah, it just got smaller, for some reason. So, COCs can apply for basically two buckets of money in this NOFO. A bucket of money through the unsheltered homelessness set aside and a bucket of money through the rural set aside. Appendix A of the NOFO has the maximum amounts that COCs can apply for under each set aside. I think what's important for purposes of today's conversation is projects that are funded through the unsheltered homelessness set aside, they can serve any geographic area of the COC. Whereas projects that are funded through the rural set aside can only serve geographies that are defined as rural with those projects.

And there are a lot of definitions of rural out there as I'm sure you all are very familiar with. The definition of rural area is in our NOFO and then to make it super easy for folks, we've gone ahead and populated all the counties that meet the definition of rural area in appendix B of our NOFO. Next slide, please.

So, there are a variety of scoring criteria throughout the NOFO that are in the scoring section of the NOFO. A lot of them are the statutory selection criteria that we are required to use when we run a COC program competition. So, the first half of that is the statutory criteria. The big part of this competition though, is we're asking COCs to submit their plan for serving individuals and families experiencing homelessness with severe service needs. And this is the bulk of the points in the NOFO and how we're going to select. And we're really looking at COCs to tell us, and to demonstrate to us that they are able to leverage housing resources other than COC funded housing, when providing housing to people experiencing homelessness.

So, this can include leveraging local development dollars. It can include leveraging resources from your public housing agency. There's a variety of other providers who provide housing resources, and this is looking for them to bring those housing resources to bear, to serve people experiencing homelessness. We're also looking for folks to leverage healthcare resources. So, to provide the wraparound supportive services that people need to obtain and maintain housing, to work with healthcare organizations, including hospitals, mental health providers, and substance abuse treatment providers.

We're asking communities to tell us what is their strategy to identify shelter and house individuals and families experiencing homelessness, specifically experiencing unsheltered homelessness, and then how over the course of these grants, are COCs going to update their strategy using data and performance? So, we want communities to be continuously looking at their data and updating their strategies to bring forward things that are working and to maybe stop using things that they're finding aren't working.

We're asking communities to tell us how they identify and prioritize people for housing and services who are experiencing currently, or have histories of unsheltered homelessness. So, really making sure that communities are able to get there and identify people who are living really far back in the woods, for example.

We're looking for COCs to tell us how they are involving individuals with lived experience of homelessness in decision making and service delivery. So, it's really important to us that the people that we serve in our projects are also involved in the design of our projects and the design of our systems, using their experience to inform how we do things. And then supporting underserved communities and supporting equitable community development. This is where we're getting at the increasing equity throughout our system. How are you identifying and how are you serving those communities that are underserved in your geographic area? Next slide, please.

I think Sid, I'm going to turn it over to you to walk through the, what we're going to fund in this NOFO from the project level.

Sidhartha Nilik...: All right. Thank you, Brett. So eligible project types. In [inaudible 00:20:46], we have four distinct funding opportunities. That is our unsheltered set aside, our rules set aside, our planning, our planning costs and our UFA costs. Under our unsheltered and rural set aside, the following project types are eligible. So, for permanent housing, you have permanent support housing and permanent and rapid rehousing. You have the joint component and then you have three supportive service-only type projects. So, that is the SSO coordinate entry, SSO street outreach and the SSO standalone. And then the final eligible project type under both the unsheltered set aside and the rural set aside funding opportunities is HMIS.

We also have planning and UFA costs. Those are their own project applications that you will be able to find in [inaudible 00:21:35] and to point out that both COC planning and the UFA costs come from the unsheltered homeless money only, not from the rural set aside money. Next screen, please.

So, eligible costs. In general, all the activities eligible in the COC program are eligible for projects awarded under this competition to carry out, except hard costs. So, that's acquisition, new construction and rehab. This is only funded under the rural set aside. So, if you were to apply for ... if project was applied under the unsheltered or planning or UFA costs, those would not be eligible for hard costs. You would have to have had a project under the rural set aside funding opportunity to be able to be eligible for hard costs.

COC planning, UFA costs, as I said, are funded under the unsheltered homeless set aside money. So, if planning or UFA costs is applied, for that's not coming out from the rural money, rural funding opportunity. And then we'll talk about additional eligible activities that are permitted under the rural set aside, as the

rural set aside is a little bit more expansive on things you can do, compared to the unsheltered set aside application. Next screen, please.

So, eligible costs. So, rural set aside. This NOFO allows for a multitude of eligible costs for the rural set aside. So, I'll just go through this list. So, up to six months of rent or utility arrears after two months with nonpayment of rent or utilities. Short-term emergency lodging motels or shelters, either directly or through vouchers. Repairs up to $10,000 per structure, that are necessary to make housing habitable and to be used for transitional or permanent housing. Emergency food and clothing assistance. Costs associated with making use of federal inventory property programs, to house individuals and families experiencing homelessness, and capacity of building activities.

You'll be able to apply for these costs in your project application. Some of these costs can be applied on what we call the supportive services budget screen in the project application. And then we have in the application, the capacity building activities, is its own separate budget line in our summary budget. If you're able to explore the project application, then you can request up to, I believe 25% of your budget to be capacity building activities. I believe that is the percentage. Next slide please.

All right. What is our participant eligibility? For the unsheltered homeless set aside, projects are funded under projects ... Participant eligibility for unsheltered homeless set aside would be people who ... participants meet paragraph one and paragraph four. What essentially that means is, that's essentially those living on the streets and those fleeing or attempting to leave DV.

For rural set aside, we allow eligible participants to come from categories one, two, and four, if you want ... And category two is people who are within 14 days of losing their housing. If you want to serve category three, you'll need to request HUD approval for category three definition of homelessness. Next slide, please.

Other project requirements. All projects under the special NOFO must adopt a housing first approach. So, you would not be awarded any funds if you do not adopt a housing first approach. All projects must pass eligibility and quality thresholds that are outlined the NOFO to be considered for funding. So, if you go through the NOFO, you can see we have exact threshold items listed for projects that ... certain items that you need to meet for the project to be awarded funds. And then all applicants must demonstrate in their project application, how they're consistent with the COC's plan for serving individuals and families experiencing homelessness would severe service needs, and that was what Brett was talking about prior to me coming on and speaking on these slides. I believe this was my last slide, and I think I'm going to ... passing off to Ashley.

Ashley Tolman:	Thanks so much, Sid. Hi, my name is Ashley. I'm happy to be with you all today and getting to talk a little bit about partnering with COCs, which is a favorite topic of mine, especially when it concerns rural communities in particular. I think when we talk about partnering with COCs, that may be a newer term for some of you, it may be an entity that you're familiar with, or maybe an entity that you're unfamiliar with and are going to need to look up the contact board and see who it is. So, we're going to try to reach broadly in sharing this information. So, hopefully there's something of interest in here for all of you.
	Looking at this, we are hopeful that you will see that there's benefit in that partnership, regardless whether you're coming in for this current funding opportunity or seeking funding. And that comes down to why would you be partnering in the first place? I think is an important question to have to ask with this being a webinar targeted to recipients and people who have interest in USDA. I think the common thread here is an interest in the health and wellbeing of our rural communities. And when we're interested in health and wellbeing for people in our communities, which includes economic health access to opportunities and all of those kinds of things, housing is something that can't be separated. Safe and affordable housing is critical to the health of communities. It's critical to being able to develop a workforce and sustain a workforce. It's critical to be able to allow for children to grow up in a community and maintain a place in that community to contribute to it going forward.
	So, when we talk about affordable housing, what we're talking about really is an individual not having to spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Even then, that could be a little bit tight according to some studies, but that's where we're starting from. And one of the things that we look at in regards to affordable housing and homelessness is number one, housing is what resolves homelessness. And hopefully, that's something that we can all be clear on going into this, but as you increase the burden, cost burden on households and individuals, that tends to take a significant toll and can create a situation where someone then winds up being unhoused. It's interesting to look at some of the statistics and studies around this. Certainly there was one done just a handful of years ago, that suggested that even when you hit that 22% of income mark, that translates to more people experiencing homelessness. When you jump up to housing costs being 32% or more, that moves into a much faster rate of people experiencing homelessness and potential homeless crisis within a community.
	So, this is something that we know right now is critical to be looking at, especially in light of the disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 and the associated economic impacts that quickly followed that, for so many Americans across the United States. Part of how we look at that housing health and respond to what we know are increased cost burdens for Americans and rural communities around housing, is looking at that housing stock and trying to make sure that it's healthy within our community. We can't only put people into housing by covering rent costs. There actually has to be a physical structure there. And this is an area that your local continuum of care has natural interest in. The response to homelessness again, has to really include a housing strategy.

So, one of the things you could partner together to look at and do is really try to influence a net gain in affordable housing availability within your community. In preparation for this, I was looking at some of the USDA resources toward affordable housing and looking at the number of loans actually that are reaching maturity and where there would potentially be a loss of affordable housing within rural communities from those USDA loans.

I noted in a study done by the National Income Housing Coalition, that between the years 2016 and 2027, they anticipate a loss of 1,800 units per year of affordable housing as a result of that. Moving just a little bit farther, so starting in 2028, just six years from now, the estimated loss is closer to 16,000 affordable housing units per year. That's estimated until 2032. And then after 2032, even 22,000 affordable housing units per year being lost in rural communities. So, with the combination of all of these factors that are influencing communities and households within those communities, really is I think, a critical time, more so than ever, to link arms in partnership and try to consider how we can address the really affordable housing availability needs within our community and make sure that we have a solid response together to create a community safety net in response to those who have become so severely cost burdened in their housing, that they do experience a period of time without their own home, and trying to be responsive to that as much as is possible, to support community members who may need services to maintain housing.

So, I think that there are some resources out there and some ways in which people can access housing affordability. And you've all seen probably, a variety of levels of social service options that are available. We know that trauma is a reality of a lot of people's lives. We know that childhood trauma has specific impact on adults, and we know that the experience of cost burden of housing instability and homelessness in and of themselves are traumatic experiences. Sometimes that means that individuals will also need services in order to maintain housing successfully. And that is a great place for partnership with continuum of care. I like that we were talking earlier about trying to reach underserved populations within our community. And this is often an underserved population within our community, where we're not sure how to get the right services for an individual to be able to resolve their own homelessness, and continuums of care have access to a lot of really good information about how to try to do that well, and would be a great thought partner in figuring out how to cobble those resources together.

And then the last one, to overall increase resources coming into rural communities. So, this funding opportunity was mentioned here today. I think one thing that I know about work in rural communities is that people have to be naturally scrappy in order to make things work well for people. And with that, as we lock arms together in partnership, we can find more ways to bring in resources in coordinated ways. So, working together for common goals and actually achieving outcomes for community, and hopefully moving beyond a thought of I'm bringing this into my agency, but being able to move into a space

with continuum of care and others as partners, to consider how you can meet those broader community needs and really connect in with what individuals are experiencing, who needs support. We can go to the next slide.

So, a few people were asking about how they would get in touch with their COC. I think Brett posted this link that I have linked in this slide here already within the chat, there is a COC grantee contact information list available online, and our recommendation would be to start with that list and contact the COC collaborative applicant. So, within the COC, governance structures look a little bit different for different COCs. There's a nice balance of local flexibility that plays into this community organization, I guess. I want to say program, but I also want to be clear that the continuum of care is not only COC funding. It has responsibilities for community planning and more holistic access and connection to resource among other things.

So, within that structure, it is required that the COC designate a collaborative applicant, they're responsible for responding to the NOFO and also be familiar with that whole process for rank and review for availability of funding and those types of things. So, we recommend that as a first place to reach out. If you get in there and find that the contact information is old for that individual, you could also reach out to an HMIS lead, or even a local grantee or service provider. And you can actually search for other HUD grantees on that same page by using the check boxes to the left.

So, I mentioned that each COC has their own governing structures and priorities. This is important to know, especially if you're planning to come in as an applicant for funding, because not only do the things that Brett and Sid just went through, apply to you in terms of what HUD requires, you're also going to want to make yourself familiar with what the local priorities are. And through partnership, you have an opportunity to help shape those local priorities, but know that there may be some already in place as you're coming into this conversation. It's not one that only just started, it's one that has been going for some time and that, I think COCs that cover rural areas and particular are very interested in finding new stakeholders to engage in that conversation on the whole. So that's, I think, something that's important to be aware of as you move into this, and you can understand the basic requirements, and then you have to understand how things work locally.

So, Brett mentioned the October 20th deadline for this unsheltered NOFO with the rural set aside within it. If you were applying for project funds, you will have an earlier deadline that you would need to submit that application to the COC in order for them to review it, and then submit the consolidated one to HUD by the 20th. That being the case, and being not too far away, if you are interested, I would recommend looking up your collaborative applicant right now and giving them a call after this webinar ends, to see if you can know when those deadlines are and see how you can get involved.

I also want to throw out there that one of the challenges that we see when looking at response to homelessness in rural communities, and there are several, one being homelessness looks a bit different in rural communities. And sometimes, we have to have back and forth and appreciate our HUD partners for engaging in dialogues about how we can use existing regulations or shift regulations as needed to meet those specific needs. But there are also are challenges around capacity that workforce development need and priority that USDA is a real thing, that applies to all different sectors. And with that concern around capacity, it may very well be the case that even if you're not interested in applying for a program application and bringing funding into your agency, you could be a critical part of increasing capacity to bring other forms of resource into the community, or even to help put together the collaborative application for this funding round.

So, if that's something of interest to you, I would really strongly recommend reach out to your collaborative applicant again, in that case, and see if there's something that you can do to support the process. I think we've heard of some rural communities that are so overwhelmed that while they would like to apply and see the need, it becomes infeasible for them at some point.

And then the last piece here on this slide, what kind of COC am I trying to partner with? Similar to there being different governing structures and setups and subcommittees for all of the different COCs, however they choose to set it up, certainly when we look at different geography makeups of different COCs, that's going to influence the way it operates as well. So, Ebony talked a little bit about this before, but when we're talking about a large geography continuum of care, a statewide, or a balance of state continuum of care, it tends to cover massive geography. And within that, sometimes they'll have more of a regional setup.

So, you might reach out to and have a conversation with a continuum of care collaborative applicant and find out if there's anything happening more locally to the area that you're familiar with. That could be a different conversation with people at different levels than say, a very small few county rural continuum of care, which faces other kinds of challenges in trying to access resources and self-advocate for what's needed within those communities. So, just a note to be aware of.

And if we could go to the last slide, this is just, I think a recurring theme, that is really critical in the way we interact with each other. We could come up with lists of considerations for meaningful partnership and I don't imagine very many of them would be brand new to you. The reality is to do this work well in any community and especially rural communities, we really need to be about other people and center the people that we're trying to serve through this work.

So, as Brett and Sid made reference to we're looking for ways to find the people who have the experience of having lived in a period without a home, to be able to help drive resources, to be able to help us see a system that can actually

center those individuals to be able to serve them well. That looks like, I think, all of us bringing what we have to the table, and again, linking arms as community to find ways that we can relieve the pressure on those individuals who are in need of support and services, and actually do some of that coordinating ourselves. Try to assist in an individual not having to retell their story over and over and over again, in order to get access to some basic needs.

And that's something I think we can invite everybody to be a part of as we work to again, see people as people, who come with all of the complications, and desires, and volition, and experience, and baggage that human beings come with and recognize that we're really trying to ensure that what we have in place works for them, and where it doesn't, where there are systemic factors that need to be changed, that we can again, work together in order to be champions, to deconstruct those and build something up that is equitable, and that is supportive. And ultimately that resolves homelessness for individuals in our communities. I think I'm passing to William now for some questions and answers.

William Snow: Thanks so much, Ashley, and thanks to everyone for presenting today. Just wanted to pause and take a step back. Really want to thank USDA for giving us a space to talk to all of you. We know some of you may interact with your continuums of care, and many of you probably do not. This may be the first time you're even hearing about that concept of a continuum of care. We're hoping that this starts a conversation of, what is the continuum of care? Where might I find that COC in my area? How do I engage with them? I imagine you all have similar missions already with those who are operating the COCs, what their mission is. We want to give you a chance to be together. It's always nice to be able to do that in the context of funding. We know, especially in rural communities, but really in all communities, funding can be limited.

We may not have ... Well, we rarely have all the resources to meet the needs that are there. There are just so many needs. So, if you get nothing else from today, we hope that we give you that connection to how to connect with other people in your community who are engaged with helping those with needs, especially those who are lacking housing. I'm going to turn to some of the great questions we've received today. There's a good range. It's helpful for us to consider what this concept of a COC is. Do you have to become a COC for instance, to apply for the funding? Let's answer that set of questions first. Ebony, I want to turn to you and answer that question of if I want to become a COC, what would I do, or how would I engage with my COC if there's one in my area?

Ebony Rankin: Oh, that's a good question. So, we did send ... I think I posted and also Brett posted a link, of where you can go and look and find the COC that's in your area. It's nationwide, plus, like I said before, Guam, Puerto Rico and Mariana Islands. So, chances are, you do have a COC in your area. If you have problems finding one, you can put in a chat, let us know. William, I'm pretty sure most of the ... I think 95% of the United States is covered by a COC. So, chances are, you should

be covered by a COC, and that's your first step, is to find out what COC you're in. And then we do have excellent contact information on that website for you to contact the folks in the COC to get started on what it takes to get involved in the COC and to get into their local competition, so you can possibly apply for grant through the continuum care program.

William Snow: Thanks, Jemine. Yeah, just to put it in contact, whether or not you have a COC, we have about 3,200 jurisdictions that we consider in the geography of the United States, including the territories. All but about eight are covered. So, that's a 99 point XXX percent covered. So, there's almost an impossible likelihood that you would not be in a COC already. So, we'd strongly encourage you to reach out. Another opportunity, and we'll put this in the chat, is if you're not sure the resources to find whether or not you have a COC that is in your area. You can email us at the COC or at the special NOFO at hud.gov email. That's the email address that's addressing questions tied to this special NOFO and we can make sure that we help you there. We don't want this to be a game of how do I find ... We'll help you find who's appropriate for your area so that you can make those appropriate context.

Let's do another question. We're going to shift gears a little bit. There was a good question around what you can apply for. And there's a question around tiny homes. So, there's a tiny home community, can that ... and it's for people experiencing homelessness, is that eligible under our program? I'm going to turn to Sid to answer that question around what's eligible in terms of appropriate projects that you could fund through this funding opportunity.

Sidhartha Nilik...:   So, on eligibility, you would be going through the ... In terms of projects, you'd be using the unsheltered and the rural homelessness project funding opportunities. And under those funding opportunities, you can apply for permanent supportive housing, rapid rehousing, joint projects, SSO projects, which consists of three different projects. That's the coordinated entry, the street outreach, and the other that covers all the other types of supportive services, and then your HMIS. So those that's what would be covered under your eligible project types, both under the unsheltered set aside and the rural set aside funding opportunities.

William Snow: Perfect. Thanks, Sid. I'm going to back up a little bit on some of those terms. We're great at using acronyms and having things that we refer to in the federal government and HUD does certainly no exception. So, I'm going to walk us through a couple of those things. When we're talking about rapid rehousing, we're talking about a type of program that provides permanent housing. So, it's an opportunity where somebody can sign their own lease. It gets subsidized for up to two years, and they can keep their name on the lease beyond that. So, we consider that a form of permanent housing with a temporary subsidy. We refer that as rapid rehousing.

There's another type of permanent housing, where there's an indefinite subsidy and a person will receive rental assistance through that subsidy program. And

they'll stay there for as long as they need. For our programs, you have to have a disability for that and they typically are connected to services. We actually refer to it as permanent supportive housing. There's another set of things that we have mentioned. I should just mention the joint transitional housing, rapid rehousing. That's just tying a temporary subsidy in a more temporary setting. Usually it's a facility that somebody will stay in for a certain amount of time. It could be weeks, it could be months. And then they transition to that permanent housing scenario where they get a temporary subsidy in that. That's this joint transitional housing, rapid rehousing.

So tiny homes, there's not a space where a tiny home fits exactly. A tiny home could meet a couple different criteria. It all depends on how the tiny home model is operated. How permanent is the subsidy? What kinds of services are available on site? There are things like that to think through. Again, we have that in our actual NOFO, as well as our regulations that talks through those.

I just want to make sure we step back and just give you some of those terms as well. And feel free to put in the chat if we say other acronyms or terms that don't make sense to you because we're thinking in the HUD space and haven't stepped back into it.

All right, let's take another question. Looking at the question around food. Brett, I'm going to have you answer this one. There's a good question around whether or not we can pay for food in the form of fresh fruits or vegetables. Again, especially addressing this concept of food deserts. What's available through this funding opportunity to address that?

Brett Esders: Sure. So, as was just mentioned all, all of the costs that you apply for under this competition have to come in through one of those eligible components. So, it has to come in as an SSO project, for example, or a rapid rehousing project. But we fund supportive services under the continuum of care and one of the eligible supportive services is food. And so, the cost of providing meals or groceries to program participants, to help them obtain or maintain housing is eligible. So, that would include if you're doing street outreach, for example, and you're going to encampments and you're finding people and you're attempting to engage them so that you can identify them and also help them get ready for housing and make sure that all their emergency needs are met. You could bring food and you could use food as one of the ways to engage folks. If you have people living in housing in one of your projects that's funded and they need groceries, you could pay for groceries for that. What you wouldn't be able to do is use this funding to open a grocery store, for example, but you can provide food to people experiencing homelessness who are participating in programs.

William Snow: That is great. Yeah, we want to make sure that we're not just addressing the housing needs, but we're addressing the overall needs of people who are experiencing homelessness. If they're in that situation, their needs are abundant, there's all sorts of things that they're going to need. We encourage strong partnerships with healthcare providers and other providers as well to

provide that. So, we see this as a community effort. the HUD funding is eligible to provide those things. We'd like it to focus on the housing, but it can focus on the other things. But again, part of this is to say, "Hey, we have these pieces, let's pull it together so that we can make sure people experiencing homelessness in our community have access to what they need to succeed."

So we love this, and this is what rural communities do best quite frankly, pool all sorts of resources and use the opportunities they have, to make sure folks experiencing whatever challenges that they're experiencing, get access to succeed. And I should say, we are focusing on rural in a lot of the conversation, but we know that not everyone here is probably in a rural community. And this funding opportunity in and of itself is not limited to rural funding. There's a special set aside, but if you're not in a rural community per the appendix B we posted, you also still could be eligible through your continuum of care to apply for funding under the unsheltered aspect.

There was a follow-up question I saw a little earlier around clarifying entities. There are actually a couple of questions around who is eligible to apply for funding. Sid, I'm going to go back to you on this one. There's two aspects of this. One around, well generally, who is eligible to apply. And there's some specific ones around nonprofit organizations, or governments, or educational entities. Can you address the, who was eligible to apply for funding, piece?

Sidhartha Nilik...:   Yes. Sorry, I'm just getting my video up. Let me try to bring up ... Well, so we have our eligible nonprofits, state and government entities, tribal organizations. I'm trying to think of who am I missing? Educational facilities. I think that covers the largest group of people that we usually applying for our funding. You cannot be a for-profit institution, that's one that we say no to. In the past, we were a no on tribal and that's now changed too. We do a lot of tribal entities. Off the top of my head, I can't think of who I might be missing, but if you ... The normal ones that we have are usually nonprofit entities and state and local governments, is usually the ones that we see the most often. Those are the most common.

William Snow: Perfect, thanks Sid. Almost as a follow-up to that, I'll actually turn to Brett for this one. There's a question around, so if you're one of those eligible entities, do you have to go through the COC or what's that interaction with the COC? Can you provide a little more context on that?

Brett Esders: Sure because our application process is a little bit different than a standard application process, where I think normally how it works, the government puts out a notice of funding opportunity and then organizations can apply just on their own for funding. So, you could apply as a nonprofit to do a permanent housing project and that's not how our applications work. The way that our application works is it's a three-part application and two parts have to be submitted by the COC. And that part is giving us this ... So Ebony talked a little bit about how COCs are responsible for developing a plan to prevent and end

homelessness across their geographic area. That's a big part of the COC application.

And so, we're looking at COCs to tell us how they're going to end homelessness, how their current performance is in terms of reducing homelessness, in terms of housing people. And that's where the plan that I talked about is submitted.

And then the COC is also required to ... So, there's not going to be enough money for everybody. There's not going to be enough money for every project who wants funding to get funding. And so, the COC has to take all of the projects that are submitted across their geographic area and they have to rate and rank them. So they tell us, "Hey, HUD, if you run out of money, we would really like this permanent housing project, this joint component project, and this supportive services only project funded, before you think about funding our transitional housing project," for example. So, COCs have to rate and rank all of the projects through a local competition.

And then the project applications submit those projects to the COC. So, you are submitting your project application to the COC. The COC is rating and ranking it locally, according to open public standards that are based on performance, hopefully, and then they are submitting a whole plan, including the projects that support that plan to HUD.

Now, when HUD selects projects, what we'll do is we will go straight to grant agreement with the nonprofit, for example, that submitted the project. But basically, you have the sign off on the nonprofit from the COC, that this project is consistent with the plan and is consistent with what we are trying to do in preventing and ending homelessness across our geographic area. So I'm not sure if that's helpful, but that's a little bit about how our project and our application process works.

William Snow: Thanks, Brett. I love that, that's a good way for us to ... We're nearly done here and I want to kind of use that as a way to think through what all of this means in terms of a coordinated effort. The continuum of care is just a way to organize the efforts to address homelessness in an area, which is again, why we tie it to the application process. Let's make sure it's coordinated. We don't need 10 different entities trying to do the same thing. We want them to work together, figure out how to maximize resources and help those in your community the best way possible. So, that's the whole mission of the continuum of care. We force that, so to speak, in the competition setting so that folks can make sure, again, they're on the same page with each other. So, strongly encourage you to do that, reach out to them.

We had some questions around timing. This is a real fun one. Obviously, we have our October 20th deadline. We actually have a piece in the NOFO as a competitive aspect of submitting applications to your continuum within 30 days, or 30 days prior to the deadline. This is just more for continuums to fairly rate and rank projects, and then notify folks of any concerns they have. It's possible

that some will say, "Look, I'm losing those points. I'm going to do it a little bit later so that I have a little more time." So, if you're uncertain about whether you should ask, but you might have something in mind in terms of a project, I would go to your continuum of care and just ask them, "Is this something that you're still taking applications for?"

Someone else who asks, "Is every COC doing this?" The short answer is no, we don't really know which ones. It is optional, but it is worth asking. And some may not be doing it because they don't have recipients in their area that they're aware of. So, if you present yourself, they may say, "Oh, we would love to, you're going to provide us an opportunity. We'll partner with you. But yes, through you, we can do this." So, you may actually open a door that they're hoping to open anyways.

We're hoping all of this ends up with some more coordination, some more work together. We appreciate you joining today. We will post these slides on our website. We'll also work with our friends at the USDA. We're really grateful for their partnership. We'll do all we can to make sure you have access to this going forward. And again, hopefully this is the beginning of other partnerships where we can work together. Thank you all, we really appreciate your time and look forward to seeing maybe some applications from you as well. Thank you, this concludes the webinar.

Speaker 1:   That ends today's conference. Thank you for using Event Services. You may now disconnect.