

FY 2020/2021 Community Compass

Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Program NOFA

Frequently Asked Questions

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Introduction

The following questions are provided for potential applicants for HUD's FY 2020/2021 Community Compass Technical Assistance NOFA (No. FR-6400-N-06). These questions were developed for the published NOFA as a Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document, and we anticipate that we may provide a supplemental FAQs document as prospective applicants submit questions to the Community Compass email address (CommunityCompass@hud.gov) over the next 30-45 days. These FAQs are meant to clarify new elements of the NOFA and reflect HUD's intent and the specific requirements for each NOFA applicant. HUD hopes that this additional information proves helpful to potential applicants as they respond to the different elements of the NOFA.

What is the Community Compass Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Program?

The Community Compass Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Program NOFA is a funding opportunity in which an applicant competes to receive funds to become a Technical Assistance (TA) Provider to HUD grantees and subgrantees, such as Public Housing Authorities, Continuums of Care, and Tribally-Designated Housing Entities. If an applicant is awarded funds under this NOFA, the applicant will be eligible to receive TA assignments from HUD under HUD's demand-response system for TA.

Under the Community Compass Program, HUD, its customers, and/or its partners identify TA needs of HUD grantees and subgrantees, and then HUD tasks specific TA Providers to respond to the identified needs. For instance, a Tribally-Designated Housing Entity may identify that it needs TA on financial management; after HUD evaluates and approves that TA request, it will task the TA request to a TA Provider, who will then provide that specific technical assistance.

How much funding can we request on the SF-424?

Your FY 2020 and FY 2021 funding requests must not exceed \$20 million each, and your total funding request must not exceed \$40 million. You should determine your funding requests based on the number of available personnel, the range and quality of their skills and knowledge, and your ability to successfully execute multiple assignments from HUD simultaneously over a three-year period. There is no predetermined or recommended ratio of staff resource hours to funds received. Each organization determines its own ability to operate and provide TA to HUD customers.

Does HUD offer a workshop to help applicants understand the grant application process? When and where are such workshops are offered?

HUD does not offer in-person workshops for applicants, but it does offer online resources. For further information about the application process, potential applicants are strongly encouraged to view the following webinars: “NOFA Overview” https://youtu.be/gHmvn_qvnmw and “Rating Factors” <https://youtu.be/9fIXHHTKulw> .

What types of applicants is HUD looking to fund?

See Section III.A. Eligible Applicants for the type of applicants eligible for funding under the FY20/21 Community Compass NOFA.

The organizations that apply for funding under this NOFA are applying to be HUD TA Providers; they are not applying for funding for a specific project of their own. Individuals are not eligible for funding under this NOFA.

What does a TA Provider do? How do you become one? Do they work independently?

A HUD Technical Assistance (TA) Provider can provide an array of support and assistance to HUD grantees and subgrantees, including such activities as conducting needs assessments, holding financial management trainings, or assisting with the creation of a strategic plan. TA equips HUD’s customers with the knowledge, skills, tools, capacity, and systems to implement HUD programs and policies, so the range of possible TA provided by a TA Provider is vast. To become a TA Provider, an eligible applicant must apply for funding through the Community Compass NOFA. TA Providers do not work independently; instead, they work under the demand-response system, with high involvement of HUD staff. Under the demand-response system, HUD, its customers, and/or its partners identify TA and capacity-building needs; HUD then tasks a TA Provider to provide support and assistance to address those needs. The TA Provider works closely with HUD staff to provide the TA to the HUD grantee or subgrantee.

Narrative Response and Submission

Should I submit each of the four scored responses as four separate files?

No. See Section IV.B.d. of the FY2020/2021 NOFA. Narrative responses to the Rating Factors should be submitted as one file. This file excludes your response to subfactor 1.C. *Experience of Staff, Contractors, and Consultants*, which must be submitted using the required form.

In your narrative, each of the four scored program-specific responses should be clearly and consistently labeled for subfactors 1.A., 1.B., and Rating Factors 2 and 3. For example, if Response/Topic 1 is PIH-Receivership in subfactor 1.A., it should also be the first scored response for subfactor 1.B. and Rating Factors 2 and 3.

The *2020-2021 Community Compass Application Organization Template* has been provided as an attachment to this NOFA. The template is not required, but you may use this template to help organize your funding application based on the instructions found throughout this NOFA.

Are there page limits for each Rating Factor?

There are no page limits for each individual Rating Factor, but please remember that the total page limit for the three Rating Factors combined is 50 pages. See Section V.B.2. The file that you submit as a narrative response to Rating Factors 1-3 (excluding 1.C.) must total no more than 50 pages in length. We will count the pages; any pages beyond 50 will be removed from the end and not reviewed.

What types of technical assistance are being offered, and can funding be used for capacity-building and administrative costs?

This NOFA is not a means to apply for funding for a specific capacity-building project or administrative costs. Instead, it is a means for HUD to obtain TA Providers who will then be given specific tasks based on the demand-response system to meet the TA needs of HUD customers. The organizations that apply for funding under this NOFA are applying to be HUD TA Providers; they are not applying for funding for a specific project or TA request of their own.

Where on Grants.gov do applicants submit required files (e.g., application narrative, code of conduct, required forms)?

Once an applicant creates a Grants.gov account, required files and forms can be submitted with the application package. Instructions for applying through Grants.gov are contained in the Application Package that an applicant downloads from Grants.gov.

I want to include more than 500 individuals on the Experience of Staff, Contractors, and Consultants (subfactor 1.C.) form. Can I add rows or recreate the form?

No. The forms are Paperwork Reduction Act (PRA)-approved; you must use only the HUD-provided version of the forms. Complete the form according to instructions and do not truncate, remove, or alter field restrictions in any way. Any other versions will not be considered, the applicant will receive a subfactor 1.C. score of "0" for improper completion and/or manipulation of the PRA-approved form.

Remember that your score will be based on the average experience for all individuals you included compared to the mean experience score of all applicants. You want to be careful not to overload your spreadsheet with several individuals with a little experience in every category; it is more advantageous to include the most experienced individuals to ensure that your denominator doesn't drive down your average. We want to see an honest depiction of your team, but more is not always better, and 500 entries is more than enough.

How should an applicant calculate a funding amount for each individual program/topic if they are unfamiliar with the specifics of each actual project?

You should determine your funding requests based on the number of available personnel, the range and quality of their skills and knowledge, and your ability to successfully execute multiple assignments from HUD simultaneously over a three-year period.

If an applicant is awarded funds under this NOFA, the applicant will be eligible to receive TA assignments from HUD under HUD's demand-response system for TA. HUD, its customers, and/or its partners identify TA needs of HUD grantees and subgrantees, and then HUD tasks specific TA Providers to respond to the identified needs.

Can the total amount of funding requested by an applicant represent a greater amount than the total offered under this NOFA (i.e., \$91.125M)?

As stated on page 18 of the NOFA, the maximum award amount is an estimate based on the amount of funding available and the expected number of awards. You should determine your funding request based on the guidance provided in NOFA section IV.B.1.a.3. "Amount of funding requested." The estimated total funding is \$91.125 million, and the maximum award amount is \$20 million per project period.

Will the amount of funding requested be used to determine which applicants receive an award?

HUD does not consider the funding requested when scoring the applications, but funding requested may inform award decisions. Funding sources include: Departmental, CARES Act TA, McKinney-Vento, National Homeless Data Analysis Project, Youth Homelessness, Public Housing Administrative Receivership and Recovery, Native American Housing and Community Development, and National Fair Housing Training Academy. This information will not be used for scoring, but it will help us to determine your preferences and may inform award decisions.

Do the four scored engagements described in Rating Factor 2 have to be the same four engagements described in Rating Factor 3?

No, the engagements described in Rating Factor 2 do not have to be the same four scored engagements described in Rating Factor 3, but all four scored responses to subfactors 1.A., 1.B., and Rating Factors 2 and 3 must align with the four programs/cross-cutting topics selected from the Technical Assistance Focus Areas Table in Appendix I.

You have options when choosing how to respond to Rating Factor 3: (1) Include a comprehensive narrative that elaborates on the engagements covered in the previous Rating Factor; (2) use this opportunity to describe four additional engagements, solely focusing on the criteria in Rating Factor 3; or (3) choose a combination of options 1 and 2 for your four scored topics in Rating Factor 3. It is up to you; one option is not better than the other. The only requirement is that the responses align with the program or cross-cutting topics selected for subfactors 1.A. and 1.B.

Do the four engagements I describe in subfactor 3.A. have to be the same four engagements I describe in subfactor 3.B.?

No, the four engagements you described in subfactor 3.B. **may** be, but are not required to be, the same as the four past engagements described in subfactor 3.A. The only requirement is that all responses align with the program or cross-cutting topics selected for subfactors 1.A. and 1.B.

Envision Centers is listed in the TA Focus Areas Table in Appendix I. Why can't I select it as one of my four scored narrative responses?

HUD cannot consider participation in or coordination with Envision Centers as part of its review criteria when awarding any funds that are not specifically appropriated for Envision Centers

(Section 233 of the Department of Housing and Urban Development Appropriations Act, 2020 (Public Law 116-94)). Applicants that provide scoring narrative that makes reference to participation in or coordination with Envision Centers cannot be evaluated. To preserve your ability to compete for funding under the Community Compass NOFA, do not include references to Envision Centers in your scored narrative responses.

Disaster, emergency, or infectious disease response for HUD customers is listed in the TA Focus Areas Table in Appendix I. Why can't I select it as one of my four scored narrative responses? How do I qualify for CDBG- and ESG-CARES Act TA funding? Do I select CARES Act as one of my four scored narrative responses?

HUD is not interested in awarding an applicant for Community Compass TA based solely on their *disaster, emergency, or infectious disease response*. The intent is to identify applicants who are well-versed in HUD business (e.g., Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG)) that also have the capacity (i.e., staff, consultant or contractor) and interest necessary to respond to the infectious disease needs of HUD customers.

This information is being collected in a few ways. To qualify for CDBG- and/or ESG-CARES Act TA, applicants must: (1) Complete and submit the *Capacity & Interest* form (*unscored but used to inform award decisions*); (2) Submit a **scored** narrative response to ESG and/or CDBG that meets the specialized experience for CARES Act TA detailed in the *Appendix III: Program-Specific Minimum Experience Requirements Table*; and (3) Complete and submit the **scored Experience of Staff, Contractors and Consultants** form.

What if I do not have experience in the programs/topics listed in the TA Focus Areas Table in Appendix I?

If you do not have knowledge of and/or experience in the programs or cross-cutting topics in the table, you must describe knowledge and/or experience in similar programs or cross-cutting topics, including but not limited to housing, health, education, economic development, or workforce development. You must describe how this knowledge and/or experience qualifies you to provide TA under the Community Compass program. To aid in the review of your application, each response must clearly identify the similar HUD Office and program or cross-cutting topic to which it aligns in the "Technical Assistance Focus Areas" table in Appendix I.

Are the programs and topics in the TA Focus Areas Table in Appendix I the same as the experience categories in the Experience of Staff, Contractors and Consultants form?

No, it is not an exact match. The form has more categories than the table.

To maximize the assessment of breadth, you will find that the programs and cross-cutting topics on the “Experience” form are grouped differently than the TA Focus Areas Table in Appendix I.

The Experience form also includes a category labeled “Additional” which contains highly specific skills and experience. The information you enter for this category will not be used to generate your score for subfactor 1.C., but may be used to inform award decisions and, if funded, future TA assignments.

The FY20/21 Community Compass NOFA has a major change from previous NOFA: it limits the applicant’s scored narrative response to four programs/topics. Does this mean that I can only receive funding for the four scored programs/topics that I select for my narrative response?

In the FY 2020/2021 NOFA, applicants will submit up to four scored narrative responses for subfactors 1.A., 1.B., Rating Factor 2, and Rating Factor 3. Narrative responses are specific for up to four programs or cross-cutting topics found in the “Technical Assistance Focus Areas” table in Appendix I.

An applicant is still eligible to receive funding for a program or topic that was not selected as one of their narrative responses. Please note that there are other opportunities for HUD to determine your experience and skills: for example, subfactor 1.C. gives a quantitative and qualitative accounting of your team’s skills and experience. The Applicant Summary provides a self-assessment of your capacity and interest for various programs and topics which is also used to inform award decisions.

How will the unscored narrative responses to subfactors 1.A. and 1.B. be used? Can I provide additional unscored responses to Rating Factors 2 and 3 as well?

You may provide additional program knowledge (subfactor 1.A.) and program experience (subfactor 1.B.) after addressing the four **scored** responses, but they will not be scored and do count towards your 50-page limit. HUD will only score the first four responses, and any additional unscored responses may be used to inform award decisions.

For Rating Factors 2 and 3, you must describe **ONLY** four engagements completed within the last five years of the publication date of this NOFA. The option to provide more than the four scored responses is not available for these Rating Factors, the option for additional unscored responses only applies to subfactors 1.A and 1.B. Please note that the info provided here should be generalizable, as it is evaluating your ability to execute and any optional additions count against the 50-page limit.

Please provide guidance as it now seems the wage rate is limited to \$82.11 per hour/\$170,800 per year (without loading). In prior Community Compass NOFAs staff were able to provide rates higher than \$82.11. Are we going to have to reduce staff/consultant rates on existing awards or is this being misinterpreted?

This is an annual compensation restriction for base salary only, not including benefits. This is an effort to disclose and codify policies early in the NOFA process, but this is not a new requirement—former HUD appropriations language and HUD General Sections previously included this same restriction and it has been part of past Community Compass practices and procedures. The Technical Assistance Division will continue to determine reasonableness of hourly rates through its Wage Rate Review process. The annual restriction does not determine the hourly rate that the Technical Assistance Division (TAD) will approve for an individual, but the annual salary restriction inherently limits the number of reimbursable hours allowed annually for an individual under the Community Compass Program. TAD may approve hourly rates in excess of the calculated hourly rate for a salary of \$170,800/year; however, it will not pay more than \$170,800 annually to an individual under the Community Compass Program.

Does HUD require the applicant to execute formalized agreements with consultants prior to the award announcements? If so, must the applicant submit proof of these agreements as part of the overall proposal?

Yes, HUD requires an applicant to have executed formalized agreements with consultants and contractors at the time of application submission. Although the formal agreements are not required to be submitted as part of your NOFA application, if selected for funding, potential awardees may be required to furnish documentation as part of the administrative process.

Do subfactor 1.B. Program Experience and subfactor 1.C. Experience of Staff, Contractors and Consultants assess the same thing?

No, subfactor 1.B. evaluates the program experience of your organization as a whole, while subfactor 1.C. evaluates the breadth and depth of your TA team (i.e., staff, contractors and consultants), as measured by the experience of your individual team members. For example, your organization, “XYZ Enterprises, Inc.” may have experience training and building the administrative capacity of multiple low-performing youth homelessness programs. This is one type of activity or TA that your organization has experience delivering, and your narrative response to subfactor 1.B. should address this specifically. Your subfactor 1.C. “Experience” form may include staff or a consultant who has 20 years of federal experience managing a Youth Homelessness program, which is related, but different than the actual experience of XYZ Enterprises, Inc.

Subfactor 1.C. assesses the experience of all the individuals that make up your team. Some may be new staff, contractors or consultants, bringing new skills and experience to your organization. Subfactor 1.C. is where you receive credit for the breadth and depth of the experience of your entire team, not just the experience that your organization gained over the course of its existence, which is already detailed in the narrative response for subfactor 1.B.

In the “Experience” form, Excel is set up to only collect the number of years of experience within each of the programs or cross-cutting topics. There are two items, however, where a response other than years of experience seems appropriate: (1) Completed Administration and Rental Housing Compliance Certification courses and (2) Bilingual (Spanish). What information should we put in for these items?

The “Experience” form has been formatted to allow alphanumeric entries for these two categories only. If an individual has completed the courses and/or is bilingual (Spanish), enter “Yes” or a “Y” in the relevant cell and adding further detail in the “Qualifications Narrative” column. If the individual does not have the qualifications, enter an “No” or an “N” in the relevant cell.

In the “Experience” form of the Applicant Summary, Interest, Capacity & Experience Workbook, should an applicant enter "0" for an individual that has 10 months or less of experience?

An applicant should enter “0” if an individual has 10 months or less of experience, as well as if the individual has no experience.

In the “Experience” form of the *Applicant Summary, Interest, Capacity & Experience Workbook*, can an applicant list an individual's work location, instead of their organization location?

Yes, an applicant may list an individual’s work location instead of their organization’s location.

Can an applicant add systems (e.g., IDIS) to the “Experience” form of the *Applicant Summary, Interest, Capacity & Experience Workbook*?

Please use the “Qualifications Narrative” column in the “Experience” form to capture experience with systems not prepopulated in the form. Do not truncate, remove, or alter field restrictions in any way. Any other versions will not be considered. The applicant will receive a

subfactor 1.C. score of "0" for improper completion and/or manipulation of the PRA-approved form.

Please confirm that HUD-50070 (3/98) is the most recent and acceptable version to accompany the NOFA response. Please indicate where applicants can locate the most recent HUD-50070 available.

Yes, the form dated 3/98 is the latest version of Form HUD-50070. The form is available at the following link: <https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/50070.PDF>

How do applicants complete HUD Form 2880 Disclosure NOFA Workspace if the grant award will issue multiple requests for TA to support multiple locations nationwide? Please provide guidance and clarification to complete HUD Form 2880 for TA with multiple locations.

At the time of application, applicants must complete one HUD 2880 for each funding source requested with the application, irrespective of the funding year. For example, if an applicant is applying for funding from the 2020 Departmental TA source and the 2021 PHA Receivership source, then the applicant must complete and include with its application two HUD 2880 forms (i.e., one for each funding source).

Each part of the form shall be completed using the instructions that accompany the form along with the following additional, program-specific instructions:

General Applicant Information and Part 1: the applicant shall complete based on the total assistance requested, as noted on the SF 424.

Other Government Assistance Requested/Expected Sources and Use of Funds: for each funding source requested with the TA application, the applicant shall disclose other government funding sources that may be received for similar work. This information may not be fully known at the time of application. But the applicant is expected to update the information during the award performance period and after HUD issues TA assignments.

Interested Parties: the applicant shall disclose the financial interest of all persons, developers, contractors, and consultants, by funding source requested with the TA application. Again, this information may not be fully known at the time of application, but the applicant is expected to update the information during the award performance period and after TA assignments are issued by HUD.