

Housing & Human Services NOFA: Frequently Asked Questions

Common Application:

- Will the United Way also be reviewing these applications?
 - No. The review processes are completely separate. Whether you apply to the Community Impact Fund or not won't affect your NOFA grant application.
- Will the United Way receive a copy of Part A of my application, the Common Application?
 - No. If you intend to apply to the United Way's Community Impact Fund, you will need to send a complete application to them by the due date. The City will not be sharing the Common Applications submitted to the City with the United Way for purposes of their grant round review.
- Why is there a different deadline for the United Way's Community Impact Grant?
 - Because these are separate funding sources with completely separate application processes. The only thing that is "common" is the application form itself. Please remember to submit it separately to both organizations if you intend to apply for both grant opportunities!

Eligibility Requirements:

- Does this need to be a new or expanded program?
 - It only needs to be a new program or expansion of services if the City is not currently funding the program (i.e., if the City awarded the program funding in the previous NOFA round and this is a continuation of that program, that qualifies as eligible).
 - If you are a currently funded agency but are requesting funding for a new or existing program for the first time, then it does need to be an expansion of services. We cannot fund services that you have already been delivering unless you can demonstrate that you are going to use City funds to expand or increase your level of service.
 - If you are a new applicant, then you must request funding only for a new service or program.
- You say you took the priorities straight from the Consolidated Plan. It's a large document with lots of goals, strategies, priorities, etc. Are they aggregated in one spot?
 - Yes. The Priorities are pulled from pages 50-53 of Section 4 of the Consolidated Plan. Not every priority is listed in the Housing & Human Services NOFA, but all those that relate directly to housing or human services ought to be. There is an abbreviated summary of priorities in Section 1, page 6 as well.
<https://cob.org/services/planning/consolidated-plan>
- Our services do not squarely fit with the program goals outlined in the NOFA. What should we do?
 - You should select the goal that is closest to your main program goal, even if it is not an exact match. If you need help to determine which is most closely aligned, reach out to the City staff contact.

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Completing the Application:

- Our agency has more than one program. Should we submit two separate applications?
 - Yes, you must submit two separate applications – one for each program. There is no way to combine applications for multiple programs in our application system. We treat each application as unique no matter how many programs each agency has.
 - You may copy and paste identical information into Part A and B of the Common Application for both programs. That information is about the agency as a whole and so won't change for each application. The rest of the application (Part C and the City Addendum) is specific to the program, and so you should answer the questions as they apply to the relevant program.
- Word count/page limits: On the common application, it asks to limit responses to 2 pages for the first 5 questions, and another 2 pages for the second 5 questions. On the training video, you make a general reference to the page limits and then also that each answer must be limited to a word count of 250. Or is it 250-word count if you're submitting online and just a 2-page limit if you're submitting it in hard copy?
 - There is some discrepancy between the online word count limits and the hard copy page limits (because obviously an exact word count on applications submitted in hard copy cannot be enforced). The online web form only allows for character limits. 1,500 characters is equivalent to 1/2 page, or 250 words. Since providing a short answer to one question won't save you space on the next question on the online application, to make it fairer we chose a per-question limit of 1,500 characters on the online submission form. (So technically if all your answers were on the longer side you could have a total of 2.5 pages to answer five questions.)
- Is this a 1,500-character limit with spaces or without spaces?
 - The character limit *does* include spaces (and punctuation) for the online submission form. The software can't tell the difference between letters, spaces, etc.
- There are no page limits given in Part 2 of the application (City Addendum). Is there an approximate length (words/pages) you are looking for, or can we take as much space as we need?
 - If you fill out the online application form, you'll see that the questions in the City Addendum also have a 1,500-character limit (about 250 words). Most of the questions in the Addendum are multiple choice, though a few are narrative; this only applies to the narrative questions. Please stick to these guidelines for the Word version as well (if you do not submit through the online portal).
- Is the 2018 Community Health Assessment the most recent?
 - This process is ongoing, but the last report was published in 2018, so that should be the most recent. See links below:

<https://www.whatcomcounty.us/DocumentCenter/View/35972/2018-Whatcom-County-Community-Health-Assessment>

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<https://wa-whatcomcounty.civicplus.com/DocumentCenter/View/38844/Community-Health-Snapshots-Executive-Summary-2018>

<https://www.whatcomcounty.us/2929/Community-Health-Assessment>

- How tightly should we define our beneficiary “target population”?
 - A good rule of thumb is, if a client must belong to a specific population to be eligible for your services, that is your “target population.” Please select only that target population, even if your beneficiaries may happen to also belong in other categories. If your program has broad eligibility standards (for example, any low-income households or individuals), then you could select all the categories that are reflected in that population served.
- Funding and partnerships: Not sure what parameters to put around this response. What do you recognize as "most significant" funding sources? What time frame are you looking for?
 - What counts as a major funding source really depends on your organization’s budget. For some organizations, \$5,000 dollars might be a significant funding source. For others, that would be minor. At minimum, please include the other funding partners that provide (or are projected to provide) the predominance of the program budget.
 - We don’t have a specific timeframe in mind. You should answer this based on what is typical for your organization. If 2022 is a good representation of that, you can just speak to where most of your funding came from last year. If it was atypical, then give a summary of where most of your funding usually comes from.
- For the Program Goal in Part D: How should we select just one goal when we feel that our program addresses many of these goals?
 - We recognize that this can be difficult for some programs to choose just one goal, but keep in mind that you are identifying only the primary goal. In other words, this is the main reason your program exists. For example, if you are a hunger relief agency, and in helping to relieve hunger your programs may also help to reduce your clients’ vulnerability to homelessness, your primary goal is to provide basic needs. In other words, you are providing basic needs to *everyone* you serve, and that might help some clients avoid homelessness. Your primary goal is the one that is addressed for *all* clients.
- For Exhibit C - Goals and Outcomes, the only goal to choose is "Address and Prevent Homelessness." If we are not addressing homelessness, do we just fill in our own goal, or do we just fill in the "Beneficiaries Served by Income Levels" at the bottom of the page?
 - We are limited to a specific set of HUD goals. Please leave the goal as “Address and Prevent Homelessness” as it is generally connected to the outcomes of these programs. Please fill out the Beneficiaries Served by Income section. Do not fill in your own goal.
- Should we only count expected beneficiaries who live in Bellingham?
 - No. You may count all beneficiaries who *receive* services in Bellingham. We do not ask you to track where your clients live. The City cannot provide funding for services provided outside of Bellingham’s city limits, so if you have programs inside and outside of Bellingham, you must be able to track your beneficiaries by location.

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Contract & Funding:

- Is this a one-year or a two-year grant?
 - Please see NOFA, Page 2, Section I: <https://cob.org/wp-content/uploads/services-nofa-2021.pdf>. The budget should reflect your 1-year ask (annual budget), and we plan to offer 2 years of funding, provided the dollars are available in year 2 as expected.
- Is this funding given on a reimbursement basis, or are we given a lump sum and then draw down?
 - Funding is distributed on a reimbursement basis. Please see the contract terms here: <https://cob.org/wp-content/uploads/contract-requirements.pdf>
- Are audited financials a requirement? (Is this something we should budget for?)
 - The audited financial statements required will vary depending on the size of your organization's budget. Larger organizations usually do a full audit every few years, while smaller ones might contract with a CPA to do a financial review periodically. Very small organizations might have a board member who is not typically involved with finances do an independent review. You can find a description of our financial review expectations at <https://cob.org/wp-content/uploads/financial-review-expectations.pdf>.
- How much funding should we ask for? Is the maximum funding request \$50,000?
 - Your request should be based on actual program needs and other sources of funding available. There is no maximum request amount. The typical range of funds given is between \$10,000 and \$50,000, and applicants should be aware of that when selecting an appropriate amount to request.

Application Submission & Review:

- Can I drop off my application at City Hall?
 - No. For this year, you must submit via the online application portal or by mail (hardcopy and USB drive). If you choose to mail your application, please use USPS and make sure it is postmarked by the submission deadline. Please see the NOFA for detailed instructions.
- If we are a returning applicant, can we see our scores from the previous year(s)?
 - Yes, this is public information and was published as part of the Community Development Advisory Board's packet. Please feel free to email us if you would like to have that information sent to you.
- How important is it to attend and offer testimony on behalf of our programs at the Public Hearing, or mail in support for the written comments in March? Does that affect funding much?
 - It is not required that you attend the public hearing or offer testimony. This will not be part of your score, nor will it impact the likelihood of your program being funded one way or another. This is the public's opportunity to weigh in on the overall housing and services budget and priorities and see the programs/projects seeking funding in the community.