



# Lancaster County Joint Funding Homelessness Services Grants FY26-27 Overview and Instructions

## Instructions

This guide describes the Lancaster Joint Funding Homelessness Grants opportunity and provides instructions for applying in the Neighborly portal. Applicants must review this guide prior to submission to ensure alignment with the CoC's system priorities.

## Introduction

The Lancaster County Joint Funding opportunity is a coordinated approach to investing in community-based solutions that address homelessness and increase housing stability. Through this approach, public and philanthropic partners align resources, priorities, and expectations to support programs that respond to local needs and strengthen overall system performance.

Rather than operating as isolated funding streams, Joint Funding centers shared outcomes, including decreasing the length of time households experience homelessness, increasing housing stability, and improving access to services that support long-term stability. Funding decisions are informed by community and system-level data, such as performance trends, identified service gaps, and community input including individuals with lived expertise.

Lancaster County is designated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as the PA-510 Continuum of Care (CoC), an entitlement community that receives formula-based federal funding. The Joint Funding opportunity provides the structure for deploying these resources, along with local and philanthropic funds, in a way that supports effective programs, reduces duplication, and promotes consistent, transparent decision-making.

Community partners that typically contribute financially to Joint Funding include the County of Lancaster, City of Lancaster, Lancaster County Continuum of Care, Lancaster County Redevelopment Authority, United Way of Lancaster County, and the Lancaster County Community Foundation. The Office for the Homelessness Coalition continues to seek additional investors to expand available resources and strengthen the local homelessness response system.

## Applicants:

Eligible applicants are nonprofit organizations, including faith-based, that are registered as 501(c)(3) entities and are in good standing, and that provide or propose to provide housing or housing-related services in Lancaster County to households experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

For this funding opportunity, good standing means the organization is legally registered and authorized to operate in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, is eligible to receive public funds and is not suspended or debarred by any federal, state, or local authority, is in compliance with applicable federal, state, and local laws, and, where applicable, is current on required reporting and contractual obligations for any prior or current funding administered through the Office for the Homelessness Coalition.

## Eligible Programs:

This funding opportunity is intended to complement, not fully replace, other public and private funding for programs. Applicants are encouraged to leverage additional resources to support program sustainability and impact. Programs are expected to focus on making homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring.

Funding is available for the following program types:

**Street Outreach – Engagement (short term), Assessment and Case Management:** The role of the Street Outreach team is to provide services such as engagement, coordinated entry assessment, case management, and other services as needed to unsheltered individuals living in the community. The primary focus for the Street Outreach team is engagement with individuals, assisting with immediate needs and moving towards housing/stability for individuals who are HUD defined as homeless.

**Coordinated Entry Agency:** The Coordinated Entry Agency, in partnership with the O4C, is responsible for handling incoming requests for homeless services and moving individuals quickly through the assessment process.

**Coordinated Entry Manager:** The Coordinated Entry Manager, in partnership with the O4C, is responsible for training and guidance surrounding the CE System. This includes any changes to Empower Lancaster processes such as Referrals or Events. The CE Manager also shares management responsibility of the Lancaster County By-Name List (BNL) with the O4C. This position is expected to maintain a working knowledge of the homeless response system (e.g., Outreach, Shelter, and Housing Programs) to be able to support providers and engage in system improvement. Further details regarding specific responsibilities can be found on the LCHC funding opportunities page.

**Emergency Day Centers:** Emergency Day Centers in Lancaster County serve individuals and families experiencing homelessness by providing a safe, warm, and dry daytime environment for unsheltered individuals while transitioning into permanent and stable housing. Services include coordinated entry intake and assessment, barrier resolution, benefit enrollment and income stabilization planning, assistance obtaining identification, and coordination with shelter and housing programs. Organizations seeking to operate a Day Center must apply under the Day Shelter category, not Street Outreach.

**Emergency Overnight Shelter (Full Year & Winter Only):** Emergency Shelters in Lancaster County focus on serving individuals and families experiencing homelessness. These programs provide a temporary warm, safe, and dry place for unsheltered individuals to stay while transitioning into permanent and stable housing. Between early December and late March, additional bed spaces are opened to temporarily increase the available shelter capacity during the cold winter months.

**Pathways (Rapid Rehousing) - Case Management:** Pathways is Lancaster County's Rapid Rehousing (RRH) program, a housing-first initiative focused on quickly moving people off the streets and out of shelters. Time-limited financial assistance and targeted supportive services are intended to help people regain and maintain long-term housing. Working alongside Pathways case managers, individuals and families set housing sustainability goals, develop a plan that includes mainstream and other resources, and take action to achieve their success.

**Prevention & Diversion - Case Management with Limited Household Financial Assistance:** This program's intent is to serve individuals and households at risk of becoming homeless. The program provides housing-focused case management, limited financial assistance, landlord advocacy, and connection to community resources. The overarching goal of the program is to prevent homelessness by stabilizing housing, reducing financial strain, and supporting transitions into stable, affordable housing to improve long-term stability.

**Special Projects for HUD Defined Homelessness (Categories #1 and #4 only):** This limited funding category is an opportunity for agencies to apply for programming that specifically addresses individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Innovative programs or other programs that do not align with the above categories can apply through Special Projects.

All programs must operate in compliance with the current [PA-510 Standards and Procedures](#), which sets the baseline requirements for program design, service delivery, documentation, and accountability across the CoC.

**NOTE:** Permanent Supportive Housing, Crisis Housing, and match funds for other HUD programs are not eligible programs under this joint funding application.

## Client Financial Assistance

While the O4C has assisted with Client Financial Assistance for certain programs in the past, we assert that anticipating financial assistance for clients is critical to the program's success and ensuring clients are stably housed. This year, we are asking the agencies to predict, as best as possible, the anticipated client financial assistance based on anticipated households and individuals to be served. At this point, the O4C does not anticipate an expansion of CFA.

It is intended to complement services delivered by contracted organizations to provide short-term, targeted support to help individuals and families gain or maintain housing and address immediate needs (e.g., identification, transportation). Given limited resources, assistance is designed to be brief and paired with appropriate case management and documentation to ensure funds are directed to households with verified need and used in alignment with program design, applicable funding requirements, and CoC Standards and Procedures.

## Funding Sources

Total funds to be awarded are estimated at \$1.6 million for the entire county. We are mindful that the current landscape regarding federal grant awards has become uncertain. Therefore, we anticipate conditionally awarding funds in May 2026. Services needed by Lancaster County's homelessness response system far exceed that which is available through this Joint Funding process. The funding sources for FY2026 through this opportunity include:

- **Continuum of Care (CoC) Funds:** Allocated by HUD for Lancaster County and managed through the Lancaster County Housing and Redevelopment Authority.
- **Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Funds:** Allocated by HUD for Lancaster County and managed through the Lancaster County Housing and Redevelopment Authority.
- **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funds:** Allocated by HUD for Lancaster County and managed through the Lancaster County Housing and Redevelopment Authority.
- **Homeless Assistance Program (HAP) Funds:** Allocated by the Commonwealth of PA for Lancaster County and managed through the Lancaster County Housing and Redevelopment Authority, with funding available for client-related housing financial assistance.
- **United Way of Lancaster County (UWLC) Funds:** Provides flexible dollars to address homelessness and housing insecurity, allowing resources to respond to emerging community needs.
- **Katherine K. Gaeth Fund (Gaeth):** Supported by the Lancaster County Community Foundation to support prevention and diversion work across Lancaster County.
- **City ARPA Funds:** Provides a dedicated funding resource to the Clay Street Emergency Shelter (available until December 2026).
- **PHARE Funds:** Administered by the Pennsylvania Housing Finance Agency (PHFA) manages the Pennsylvania Housing Affordability and Rehabilitation Enhancement Program (PHARE) funds for local housing and homelessness prevention & diversion initiatives (available until April 2027).

## Timeline

This timeline reflects the best available information at the time of publication. All material changes to key dates will be communicated via the [LCHC Funding Opportunities](#)

Item	Date
Joint Funding FY2026 Opens	February 19 <sup>th</sup>
<a href="#">JF FY2026 Information Session</a>	February 24 <sup>th</sup> @ 9-10
Virtual Office Hours	March 3 <sup>rd</sup> 9-10 March 10 <sup>th</sup> 3-4 March 11 <sup>th</sup> 1-2
Frequently Asked Questions Closes (FAQs can be found <a href="#">LCHRA.com</a> )	March 19 <sup>th</sup> @ 4:30 PM
Applications Due in the Neighborly Portal	March 23 <sup>rd</sup> at 5 PM
New Applicant Virtual Presentations (recorded)	March 31 <sup>st</sup> 9-12 and 2-4 April 2 <sup>nd</sup> 1-3
Questions sent to Applicants (if applicable)	April 13 <sup>th</sup>
Applicants Responses Due	April 20 <sup>th</sup>
Award Announcements	May 27 <sup>th</sup>
Contract Meetings with Grantees	June 9 <sup>th</sup> to June 20 <sup>th</sup>
Contract Period	July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027

### OFFICE HOURS:

This year, office hours are offered as scheduled one-to-one meetings to ensure each applicant receives dedicated technical assistance as they prepare their submission. Applicants must email [bdegode@lchra.com](mailto:bdegode@lchra.com) to schedule. Available dates and times are listed above.

## Application and Process

**APPLICATION SUBMISSION THROUGH NEIGHBORLY PORTAL:** We use a software platform called Neighborly for processing applications and invoices. To access the platform, go to [Neighborly Software Portal LCHRA](#). New users will need to register their account and click on “Sign Up Now.” Once logged in select the Start Application button next to the Public and Homelessness Services Application. (Note: you won’t see this listed until the application period is active.) Follow the prompts to complete the application. If you have questions on the Neighborly portal, please contact Beth Dreyer-DeGoede at [bdegoede@lchra.com](mailto:bdegoede@lchra.com).

**For your convenience, we have attached the Application in Word format for you to draft responses.**

However, you must input the content into the Neighborly software to submit the application.

**APPLICATION WORKBOOK (BUDGET, DATA, AND OUTCOMES):** This workbook is designed to collect consistent, high-level program and budget data to support informed, funding decisions. It captures projected service capacity, budget structure, staffing alignment and performance indicators for the upcoming contract year (July 1, 2026 – June 30, 2027). By standardizing how data is submitted, the CoC aims to strengthen compatibility across applications.

Applicants may reference or expand upon data within narrative responses as appropriate. Please ensure adequate time to complete this workbook!

**REQUIRED MATCH:** Match represents non-federal resources that directly support eligible program costs and demonstrate local investment in the work. Match may include cash contributions or eligible in-kind services that are necessary to operate the program and align with funding requirements.

All awarded organizations must document and track match contributions throughout the contract year. Match must be verifiable, allowable, and consistent with federal and local requirements.

Recipients are required to report match contributions to the Office for the Coalition (O4C) in accordance with established reporting timelines. Documentation must include the source of match, amount contributed, and the eligible activity supported. Failure to document and report required match may impact reimbursement and future funding eligibility.

**APPLICATION QUESTIONS:** Upon release of the Application, applicants may submit questions to Beth Dreyer-DeGoede at [bdegoede@lchra.com](mailto:bdegoede@lchra.com). Substantive questions and responses will be compiled and posted in an FAQ document on the [LCHC Funding Opportunities](#). These items are shared to support informed application development and to ensure all applicants have access to the same guidance.

The FAQ submission period will close on Tuesday, March 19, 2026 at 4:30pm to allow sufficient time for responses to be reviewed by applicants prior to the application deadline.

**REFERENCE MATERIAL:** Please consult our [website](#) for additional information to complete the Application, such as CoC Standards and Procedures, Coordinated Entry Policies and Procedures Manual, and HMIS Policies and Procedures Manual.

**REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION:** Along with a completed application in the Neighborly portal, supportive documentation will need to be uploaded including:

- ADA Compliance Certification (required)
- Anti-Lobbying Certificate (required)
- PA Bureau of Charitable Organization Certificate (current good standing) (required)
- Organizational Grievance Policy (required)
- Counter Terrorism Compliance (required)
- Most Recent Executive Summary of Audited Financials (required)
- Non-Discrimination Policy (required)
- IRS 501(c)3 Determination Letter (required)
- Lived Experience Support Letter (letters from individuals participating in boards, as employee) (optional)
- Application Workbook (Budget, Data, and Outcomes) (required)
- Program Termination Policy (required)
- Other (Please upload any additional material you would like to share with the review team.)

**QUESTIONS TO PROVIDERS & NEW APPLICANT PRESENTATIONS:** All eligible new applicants are asked to present their program to the Grants Action Review Team and O4C staff during the week of March 30, 2026 (20–30 minutes presentation with Q&A). *Renewal applicants from last fiscal year are not obligated to present to the Review Committee this year.* Alternatively, renewal applicants can expect questions by email inquiring about details of the application, program specifics, and/or clarifications during the week of April 13, 2026.

## Overview Strategy for 2026

As we begin the upcoming fiscal year, the COC will be implementing a comprehensive set of strategic initiatives designed to strengthen homelessness services and meet expectations with growth. These strategies, developed

through careful analysis and cross-sector collaboration, represent our commitment to adapting to conditions while staying true to our core mission of ending homelessness. Over the fiscal year, the O4C and Steering Committee, will be initiating key priorities of System Performance Measures (data), continuous program quality improvements, and coordination across the COC. Key initiatives are as follows:

**ENHANCING THE COC'S SYSTEM PERFORMANCE MEASURES:** *The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Section 427)* requires Continuums of Care (CoCs) to measure performance not only at the project level, but as a coordinated system. These System Performance Measures (SPMs) were established to ensure communities regularly assess local progress in meeting the needs of people experiencing homelessness and report that progress to HUD.

SPMs evaluate how effectively the entire homeless response system functions, how quickly people are housed, how long they remain homeless, whether they return to homelessness, and whether income and housing stability improve. Since 2015, our CoC has measured system-level performance in Empower Lancaster using HUD's seven SPM metrics for the federal reporting year (October 1 through September 30). These measures are also scored within HUD's annual Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO), directly affecting the CoC's competitiveness in the national funding process.

These measures are more than system-level statistics or an annual report card issued at year-end. They reflect the intentional work happening every day across programs in our CoC. Every referral, housing placement, positive exit, and income connection is the result of how staff engage participants, coordinate services, and remove barriers. Those daily decisions and actions directly change lives—and they are what drive system performance. It is not separate from program practice; it is the result of it. Strong outcomes depend on collaboration, shared accountability, and steady alignment across the system.

**Measure 1: Length of Time Persons Remain Homeless:** This measure uses two sub-metrics to determine how long people stay in shelters and transitional housing. The data reported by median and average length of stay, with the goal to decrease the time someone is homeless.

*Focus: Are we making progress towards helping people become quickly and stably housed?*

**Measure 2: Returns to Homelessness:** Reports on how many clients returned to homelessness within 2 years months of exiting to a permanent housing destination. The data reports on the people returning to homelessness at less than 6 months, 6-12 months, 13-24 months, and 2 years.

*Focus: Is the system resolving homelessness permanently and is the overall number of people returning to homelessness being reduced?*

**Measure 3: Number of Homeless Persons:** Measures the change in the number of unsheltered and sheltered people based on the annual Point In Time Count totals.

*Focus: Are we seeing a decrease in the number of people who are experiencing homelessness?*

**Measure 4: Employment and Income Growth:** Informs the system of the increase in earned income and non-employment income for participants enrolled in shelter and housing programs.

*Focus: Do we see a growing percentage of adults who gain or increase employment or non-employment income to support their long-term housing stability?*

**Measure 5: First Time Homeless:** Accounts for people who became homeless for the first time during the reporting period by measuring Emergency Shelter and Transitional Housing programs enrollments.

*Focus: Is there a decrease in the number of people becoming homeless for the first time?*

**Measure 6: Housing prevention and placement for Category #3 homeless:** not reported for our CoC.

**Measure 7: Successful Placement in or Retention of Permanent Housing:** Reports on the percentage of successful exits from Street Outreach, Emergency Shelter, Transitional Housing, or Rapid Rehousing, projects into permanent housing represented by “move-in date” from Empower Lancaster.

*Focus: Does our CoC have an increase in the number of people who move indoors from the street, exit to permanent housing or retain permanent housing?*

These measures reflect how effectively our community prevents and resolves homelessness. In the upcoming contract year, focused attention will be on reducing the length of time households experience homelessness (Measure 1), strengthening income growth (Measure 4), and increasing permanent housing exits (Measure 7).

**FIVE LOCAL STRATEGIES TO STRENGTHEN COC’S SPM:** In the coming year, we will advance five strategies to align services to accelerate the path to permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness, prioritizing client-centered care throughout.

**Strategy #1:** Prioritize assessment and documentation in all programs including timely income assessments, disability, verification of homelessness, case notes, client demographics, and exit destination (measures #4 & #7)

**Strategy #2:** Emergency Shelter programs must provide supportive services that facilitate clients' path to stable housing such as care coordination, timely intake & documentation, and connection to services (measures #1 & #7).

**Strategy #3:** Day Center are required to deliver services that support clients in achieving housing outcomes through developing individualized housing plans, case management, providing education, and employment training (measures #1, #4, & #7)

**Strategy #4:** Employing the [Moving On Strategies](#) in housing programs to assist participants to move into permanent housing solutions, and expanding eligible program activities in housing programs. (measures #2, #4, & #7)

**Strategy #5:** Targeting funding that accelerates client advancement and not creating barriers to their success by expanding Client Financial Assistance in programs (measures #1, #5, & #7).

## Lancaster County Housing & Homelessness Strategic Plan (2026-2029):

The Strategic Plan contains five areas meant to provide a framework to guide county-wide efforts to address the housing and homelessness crisis in Lancaster County. The framework is intended to provide enough direction to catalyze collective action, while allowing for flexibility in implementation based on expertise from a wide range of constituents, which is critical given the uncertainty currently facing the housing and homeless service sector. As of the date of this Overview, the Strategic Plan is in its final draft stage of preparation with five key areas as follows:

**Pillar 1 | Prevention:** Strengthen our ability to identify individuals in need and intervene before they lose housing and/or require a higher level of support. (Strategies include supporting early identification and intervention efforts and increase funding.)

**Pillar 2 | Response to Urgent Needs:** Improve the real-time response to individuals experiencing urgent needs and our ability to connect them to the right resources. (Strategies include leverage resources, increase education and trainings, and expand permanent housing options.)

**Pillar 3 | Stabilization & Long-Term Support:** Enhance our ability to support individuals in achieving and maintaining permanent housing. (Strategies include expanding permanent housing options, supportive services, and efforts to retain housing after placement.)

**Pillar 4 | Housing Supply & Choice:** Expand access to affordable housing options through zoning changes, education and awareness building, and creative development solutions. (Strategies include zoning/regulation changes, increase affordable housing options, and innovative housing solutions.)

**Pillar 5 | Education & Coordination:** Strengthen local coordination and collaboration to collectively and nimbly respond to emergent needs. (Strategies include coordination and collaboration among providers, asset mapping, and data collection among sectors.)

More conversations about year one priorities are on the horizon. Until then, we encourage providers to share their input with the O4C team — your work is at the heart of making homelessness rare, brief, and nonrecurring.

## Application Review & Awards:

Applications will be screened, reviewed and scored by the Lancaster County Homelessness Coalition’s Grants Review Team, which utilizes multiple sources of information to support a fair and consistent evaluation, including:

- Agency and Program Description (Joint Funding Application)
- System Performance Measures (Empower Lancaster)
- Program Engagement and Compliance (Office for the Coalition)
- Data relating Community and System-Level Needs (e.g., CoC priorities, gaps analysis, and community data reports)

The Grants Review Team is composed of members of the Lancaster County Homelessness Coalition’s Steering Committee, representatives from United Way of Lancaster County, the Lancaster County Redevelopment Board, and the City of Lancaster, as well as engaged community members from across Lancaster County, including individuals with lived experience of homelessness. The Grants Review Team will develop funding recommendations for final approval by the Coalition’s Steering Committee.

**CORE CRITERIA:** The following areas are introduced to increase clarity, establish shared expectations, and strengthen transparency in the Joint Funding application process. It highlights the core criteria that will guide proposal review and describes what alignment looks like across key areas of program design, implementation, and system contribution.

By sharing this framework in advance, the CoC aims to receive stronger application narratives and support applicants in preparing clear, data-informed proposals that are responsive to community needs. The Review Team will be considering the following:

### **Program Design & Housing-Focused Service Model**

Evaluates the overall strength and clarity of the proposed program model. Applicants should demonstrate a well-defined, person-centered approach that clearly demonstrates the program's role within the homeless response system. Strong proposals clearly describe service delivery, participant engagement from entry through exit, and how core activities are structured to address immediate needs, reduce barriers, and support an individual's or families' progress towards stable housing.

### **System Performance & Measurable Impact**

Evaluates how the proposed program contributes to measurable improvements in system performance and participant-level stability. Applicants should clearly explain how their program strategies support progress with the CoC's System Performance Measures, such as reducing length of time homeless, increasing permanent housing exits, increasing income, and decreasing returns to homelessness while also describing how the work results in meaningful progress for the households served. Strong applications include realistic, data-informed goals and demonstrate how performance will be monitored and used to strengthen both system outcomes and participant stability over time. For renewal applicants, prior performance and trends will be considered as part of this review.

### **Collaboration & Resource Coordination**

Evaluates how the program coordinates with community partners and leverages additional resources to strengthen service effectiveness and participants' positive outcomes. Applicants should describe formal and informal partnerships, referral relationships, and strategies for connecting participants to mainstream benefits and complementary services. Well-developed proposals demonstrate meaningful collaboration that enhances service delivery, strengthens coordinated service connections, information sharing, and supports participant stability and progress consistent with the program's role.

### **Client-Centered, Accessible Service Delivery**

Evaluates how the program reduces barriers to access and ensures services are responsive to participant needs across the settings in which services are delivered. Applicants should describe operational practices that promote accessibility, such as flexible engagement strategies, language access, disability accommodation, and low-barrier entry processes. Strong proposals demonstrate how the program incorporates lived experience, monitors service quality, and adjusts practices to improve outcomes for the participants served within the program's operating environment in ways that are appropriate to and consistent with the program type and intended purpose.

### **Organizational Capacity & Compliance**

Evaluates the organization's ability to responsibly manage public and private funds and operate in compliance with applicable standards and regulations. Applicants should demonstrate a staffing structure sufficient to support the proposed scope of work, appropriate management and financial oversight, and adherence to CoC Standards & Procedures. Proposal demonstrates capacity to meet contractual and system participation responsibilities (e.g., participation in PIT activities, attendance at CoC meetings, and timely invoices) as well as compliance and monitoring to ensure accountable and effective use of resources.

### **Strategic Responsiveness to Community Needs**

Evaluates how the proposed program responds to community needs. Applicants should demonstrate awareness of identified service gaps and unmet needs within their service area and incorporate available local data, utilization patterns, and emerging trends to support their narrative. Well-developed proposals articulate how the program addresses identified needs, fills service gaps, and strengthens system functioning. This category reflects the CoC's commitment to aligning funding with evolving community conditions in a way that is grounded in data and observable trends.

**AWARD ANNOUNCEMENTS:** Awards are issued in May using prior-year allocations and remain conditional until awarding agencies confirm final FY2026 amounts to LCHRA. If final allocations differ, award amounts may be adjusted accordingly. LCHRA and the O4C use a deliberate, data-informed decision-making process to set award amounts, recognizing that changes can have real operational impacts on agencies.

Thank you for considering this partnership opportunity with Lancaster City and County CoC.

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