ESG CAPER: Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

General Reporting Requirements for Recipients

1. **When are ESG recipients required to submit the eCart?**

   Starting with their 2015 CAPER submissions, ESG recipients must report aggregated ESG Program report information at the subrecipient level, using the newly developed ESG eCart (the ESG-CAPER Annual Reporting Tool). For example, if the ESG recipient's 2015 Program Year is from July 1, 2015 through June 30, 2016, the recipient is required to submit eCart as part of its CAPER submission that is due within 90 days after the close of their program year (September 30, 2016).

2. **Does HUD require recipients to submit the eCart monthly?**

   No. The CAPER is an annual report, so HUD will only require that eCart be submitted annually as part of ESG recipients' annual CAPER submission. Subrecipients must run the **Comma Separated Value (CSV)** export for the recipient's CAPER reporting period, which covers the period from the recipient's program year start date to end date.

3. **Can ESG recipients "post" eCart for the public as part of the larger CAPER that meets Federal ADA requirements to meet the citizen participation requirements?**

   Yes. The "Combined Report" tab in eCart can be printed out, and the eCart guide provides suggestions on how outlay of that report can be formatted as necessary. The "Combined Report" tab contains the report that fulfills the eCart requirement. Recipients are not required to publically post the other tabs that support the "Combined Report" tab or provide additional features, such as filtering, for the recipient's reference.

4. **Are recipients required to report administrative activities on the ESG CAPER?**

   Yes. Administration activities are for the payment of costs related to the planning and execution of ESG activities (see 24 CFR 576.108). Funds expended for ESG administration are reported on screen CR-75. Otherwise, administration activities are not set up in HMIS and do not have direct beneficiaries to report via eCart.

5. **Should recipients report in eCart those program participants who are served with only ESG match and not ESG RRH or HP funding?**

   Yes. Recipients must report on persons served with match dollars in their ESG CAPER. To meet the matching requirement, the matching contributions must meet all requirements that apply to the ESG funds provided by HUD, except for expenditure limits in 24 CFR 576.100.

General Reporting Requirements for Subrecipients

6. **Are separate projects required in HMIS for single RRH projects funded by two different ESG grants, for example one from the city and one from the State?**

   Yes. Projects that receive ESG funding from multiple ESG recipients must create separate projects in their HMIS for each funding source (e.g., ESG City-funded RRH and ESG State-funded RRH) to distinguish program participants for reporting purposes.

   HUD recommends that recipients and subrecipients:

a. work together to design projects that use funds from one ESG recipient to support 100 percent of the ESG costs for each household; and

b. not provide ESG assistance to the same household with two different funding sources, if it can be avoided (e.g., providing 2 months of ESG city-funded rental assistance followed by 3 months of ESG State-funded rental assistance)–but rather fully fund assistance for fewer program participants with one source of ESG funding, and assist other program participants with the second source of ESG funding.

7. **May a single RRH project in an HMIS that is funded by ESG also be funded by programs other than ESG like SSVF or CoC Program funds?**

No, in general. Each RRH project should have its own project set-up in the HMIS to be able to generate required Federal reports.

The only exception to this would be if the HMIS has been customized with the functionality to combine funding from multiple Federal programs into one project to generate the required reports. In such cases, the HMIS System Administrator should verify this with the HMIS Vendor/Provider prior to setting up the project in HMIS.

8. **Must Rapid Re-housing (RRH) projects that receive both HUD-ESG and non-ESG funding, count all program participants served or distinguish between program participants based on the funding source?**

It depends. If a recipient's ESG RRH project has other funding in the project that is contributed to the **same** overall program that meets ESG requirements (i.e., those non-ESG funds would be eligible as match), then it is appropriate to set up the HMIS RRH project to include persons served by that non-ESG funding source and report those persons served on the CAPER. For example, if the provider has an RRH project that meets all ESG requirements and uses ESG to pay for rental assistance and funds from a foundation to pay for case management/support services (eligible as match), all persons would be reported - even those persons not assisted with ESG rental assistance.

However, if the RRH project includes non-ESG funds that are not administered in accordance with ESG requirements (i.e., funds that would not be eligible as match), then persons assisted with only those non-ESG RRH funds must not be included in the HMIS RRH project or reported on the CAPER.

9. **Do RRH providers report project entry dates for program participants when they are deemed eligible to receive services or assistance from the RRH project?**

Yes. Providers must report the "project entry date" for program participants for the RRH project as soon as providers determine that they are eligible to receive services or assistance. It is important to distinguish between the "**project entry date**" and the "**residential move-in date**" data elements in HMIS:

- "**project entry date**" must occur on or before the "residential move-in date."

- "**residential move-in date**" captures the date the program participant actually moves into permanent housing.

10. If a subrecipient receives ESG funds from the city, State, and county for an Emergency Shelter project, may the subrecipient generate one CSV export for that project for all three ESG recipients?

It depends. HUD does not require subrecipients to track or report on shelter beds by funding source (i.e., ESG vs. non-ESG funding or city ESG vs. State ESG) in HMIS. All program participants who stayed in the emergency shelter at any time during the program year must be reported. If a subrecipient receives ESG funds for Emergency Shelter from the city, State, and county, the subrecipient must report all persons served by the shelter to all three of their ESG recipients to be included in the city's, State's, and county's CAPERs. This means the subrecipient could generate one CSV export and send that same export to all three of its ESG recipients. However, if all three ESG recipients' reporting periods are not the same, the subrecipient must run separate CSV exports for the different reporting periods.

11. If a subrecipient only receives ESG funds for shelter operations or renovations and not for direct services, must the subrecipient submit a CSV file to the recipient for the emergency shelter project?

Yes. HUD requires shelters receiving any ESG funding for shelter operations or renovation to report on all persons served in the shelter during the reporting period. Shelters that receive ESG funding for renovation are required to comply with HMIS reporting requirements for the period determined in accordance with the minimum period of use requirements (see the ESG Program Interim Rule at 24 CFR 576.102(c)).

12. If a subrecipient receives ESG HMIS funds for coordinated entry, must the subrecipient submit data to the recipient for eCart?

No. If the coordinated entry system referred a program participant to an ESG-funded shelter or RRH project, for example, then that program participant must be reported under the emergency shelter or RRH component on the CAPER if they received ES or RRH assistance. HUD does not currently require providers to report on the "number of persons assessed by the coordinated entry system".

Comparable Databases

13. May victim service providers enter data into HMIS?

No. If a provider meets the definition of "victim service provider" as defined at 24 CFR 576.3, then that provider is prohibited from entering any data into the CoC's local HMIS. However, victim service providers must collect and enter program participant-level data into a comparable database for all of the data elements required for the ESG program. Per the 2014 HMIS Data Standards, this includes all Universal Data Elements and the Program Specific Data Elements (see page 85 of the 2014 HMIS Data Standards Data Manual. Comparable databases must meet all requirements of an HMIS, but must be distinct from the CoC's HMIS. HUD does not provide CoCs with a comparable database, and "victim service providers" are encouraged to work with their local CoC and HMIS Lead Agency to develop and implement a comparable database.

14. **Since victim service providers are prohibited from entering data into their CoC's local Homeless Management System (HMIS), can they create a CSV CAPER file?**

Yes. HUD requires that victim service providers' implement comparable databases with the functionality to generate the CSV CAPER file. All subrecipients, including victim service providers awarded Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program funds must submit a CAPER report via the CSV CAPER file to their ESG recipient. ESG recipients must collect a CSV CAPER file from all ESG subrecipients, including victim service provider agencies.

15. **What should ESG recipients do if a victim service providers' comparable database cannot create the CSV CAPER file?**

If the comparable database is unable to produce the ESG CAPER CSV files, the subrecipient may use the ESG CAPER Generation Tool to produce the files required for the eCart. The ESG CAPER Generation Tool has been updated and is available at: https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/4956/apr-generation-tool-version-40/.

If a subrecipient cannot produce the required CSV files to populate the eCart by either using the comparable HMIS software or the ESG CAPER Generation Tool, the recipient must contact its local HUD Field Office and Marlisa Grogan (Marlisa.M.grogan@hud.gov) from the Office of Special Needs Assistance Programs (SNAPS) to discuss possible remedies. Depending on the subrecipient's particular situation, SNAPS and the local HUD Field Office may agree to alternative measures, such as:

- **Short-term issues**: Grant an extension to the ESG recipient to submit the CAPER, which would provide the subrecipient(s) additional time to resolve any programming errors or to upgrade their system to produce the CSV export;

- **Long-term issues**: Recommend technical assistance (TA), if necessary, and permit subrecipients to submit required data an alternate way (e.g., Excel spreadsheet, Word document, etc.). If a subrecipient cannot report on all required 2014 HMIS data elements for ESG, the recipient may be permitted to enter the available data in the tables on CR-65. To the extent that any subrecipients are able to complete the CSV export, ESG recipients should still submit that data via eCart. ESG recipients must submit a narrative in a text box on screen CR-65 that:

    1. Identifies the data missing from the eCart;

    2. Specifies a plan for coming into compliance with the eCart requirement; and

    3. Identifies the timeline for coming into compliance with the eCart requirement.

eCart Tool

16. **What is the eCart tool?**

The ESG-CAPER Annual Reporting Tool (eCart) is a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet that is configured to load report level, aggregate information from a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and produce all statistical information required by HUD on program participants served in projects funded under ESG. eCart does not require identifiable, program participant-level data. Recipients are no longer required to manually enter data onto screen CR-65, rather recipients attach the eCart to screen CR-00 of their CAPER submission to fulfill the new requirement.

17. Should subrecipients use the eCart tool to submit reports to recipients?

No. Starting with their 2015 Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation (CAPER) submissions in October, **ESG recipients, not subrecipients,** must report aggregated ESG program report information at the subrecipient level, using the newly-developed eCart. ESG recipients will obtain data from all ESG subrecipients through a special CSV export; this will be used to populate the eCart tool for submission to HUD. The information in eCart replaces all data previously collected on screen CR-65.

18. How do recipients access the latest eCart tool?

Recipients can access the eCart tool and guide at:

https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/4785/ecart-esg-caper-annual-reporting-tool-and-guide/

The eCart Guide is located in the eCart tool on the first tab and is also posted as a separate PDF file at the link above.

19. Are there any other training materials on eCart?

Yes. Click the link below to access the "Using eCart for the ESG CAPER" webinar:

https://www.hudexchange.info/training-events/courses/using-ecart-for-the-esg-caper/

20. Do recipients attach each subrecipient's eCart individually?

No. Recipients must only upload one eCart to the eCon Planning Suite on screen CR-00, which must contain all subrecipients' data.

Subrecipient CSV Export Questions

21. Does the eCart Guide include steps for a subrecipient to prepare the zipped folder that it submits to the recipient for the recipient's eCart submission?

No. The eCart Guide does not provide these steps; however, HUD has developed guidance–eCart CSV Export Submission Steps for Subrecipients–that explains the process at:

https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/5059/ecart-csv-export-submission-steps-for-subrecipients/

22. How do subrecipients transmit CSV files to their ESG recipient?

Subrecipients can zip their CSV files and email them to their ESG recipient. HUD is aware that some ESG recipients might have difficulty receiving zip files due to their information technology system's security measures. HUD encourages those recipients to work out a system or alternative method with their IT administrators to allow for the transmission of larger/numerous files. Other than email, recipients could consider software applications that allow for shared access to files (e.g., Dropbox, SharePoint, Cloud, etc.).

23. If subrecipients subaward ESG funds to second-tier subrecipients, may the first-tier subrecipients consolidate the second-tier subrecipients' CSV files to a single CSV file and submit the single CSV file to the ESG recipient?

No. The ESG recipient must receive a single CSV export for each ESG-funded project set up in HMIS. The ESG recipient will not be able to properly upload the CSV files in eCart if data is aggregated in this way. Subrecipients must submit separate CSV files for each project to their ESG recipient.

24. What version of Excel is required for the eCart tool?

Microsoft Excel 2010 or higher is required to use eCart.

25. Did HUD fix the macros in the eCart tool?

Yes. Click the link below to access the updated eCart tool with functioning macros and guide.

https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/4785/ecart-esg-caper-annual-reporting-tool-and-guide/.

26. Why are there blank cells on the Data Tab in eCart?

The Data Tab could have blank cells if the folder imported does not have the required 32 CSV files. Check the CSV folder(s) for the project that has blank cells.

- If any files are missing from the folder, inform the subrecipient of the omission and require the subrecipient to review and resubmit the data and ensure all required data is included.

- If there was no omission, ask the HMIS Lead Agency to contact the HMIS Vendor to correct the export function for the CAPER in the HMIS.

27. How many CSV files must a subrecipient send its ESG recipient if it receives ESG funds for two projects: Emergency Shelter and Rapid Re-housing?

Subrecipients must send a CSV export to their recipient for each of their ESG-funded projects set up in HMIS. The export for each project consists of 32 Excel files–one for each ESG CAPER question (Q4a through Q26b). This means the subrecipient would send their recipient two CSV exports: one for its emergency shelter project (consisting of 32 Excel files) and one for its rapid re-housing project (consisting of 32 Excel files).

The recipient then gathers all of those individual CSV files and imports them into eCart for their CAPER submission to HUD. The data tab in eCart will show each file imported in its own row beginning on row 11.

28. How is the data error rate in eCart calculated?

Data submitted in the eCart on any one project must have a collective error rate of less than 25 percent. Projects with data errors are identified through an automatic validation process. The calculation compares one appropriate cell in the table to the answers in the report validations tables–eCart identifies both the error values and the value required to match and then calculates the percentage difference for each error. If data errors on any one project collectively exceed 25 percent, the subrecipient operating the project with errors must correct the errors in HMIS and resubmit their CSV to the recipient for inclusion in the eCart.

29. Is a recipient's CAPER incomplete if a subrecipient cannot correct the data in the HMIS?

No. If a subrecipient cannot correct the data in the HMIS so that the data error rate is less than 20 percent, the recipient must:

1. include the project's data in the eCart; and

2. in the narrative text box in screen CR-65 of the eCon Planning Suite provide:

   a. an explanation for the error along with any actions undertaken to correct the error.

   b. a corrective action plan that prevents the data error(s) going forward.