

Housing Organizational Plan – Interim Report for Input: Landscape Analysis & Initial Opportunity Criteria

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Phase 1: Landscape Analysis

Overview

The Department of Housing is charged with developing “a housing organizational plan to be provided to the general assembly that includes a review, analysis, and assessment of functions related to housing of all state departments, quasi-public agencies, boards, and commissions. Provided, further, the secretary, with the input from each department, agency, board, and commission, shall include in the plan comprehensive options, including the advantages and disadvantages of each option and recommendations relating to the functions and structure of the department of housing, including suggested statutory revisions.” (FY25 State Enacted Budget)

This landscape analysis and draft report is the first phase of the development of this housing organizational plan and reviews, analyzes, and assesses housing functions across all state departments, quasi-public agencies, boards, and commissions. The analysis was compiled through input from all of those entities, review of current state statute, review of prior housing governance reports, and stakeholder interviews and surveys. It is important to emphasize that the landscape analysis is looking at systems and structures, and how those systems and structures either support or impede housing functions. The identified opportunities for improvement will inform the future phases of this process by defining what problems need to be addressed.

This interim, draft report was produced by the Department of Housing with support from Faulkner Consulting Group pursuant to Rhode Island’s Housing Organizational Plan statutory charge. This report includes a short summary of the Housing Organizational Plan process and an assessment and review of the governance of housing functions within Rhode Island’s current housing governance landscape.

This draft report is being circulated to solicit feedback from any and all interested parties. If you have edits or feedback, especially if there are inaccuracies or omissions, we welcome your input. Please contact Kayla Rosen, Chief of Staff, RI Department of Housing (kayla.rosen@housing.ri.gov).

Housing Organizational Plan: Purpose, Approach & Process

Housing Organizational Plan Purpose

RI continues to experience a housing crisis, with the number of new units permitted still far below pre-2009 recession levels and more Rhode Islanders experiencing homelessness due to a lack of affordable, available options. A state housing planning process – Housing 2030 – is underway to identify the current state of housing in Rhode Island, set statewide goals, and develop strategies to reach those goals. Please find more about the state housing plan here: <https://housing.ri.gov/data-reports/state-housing-plan-housing-2030>.

Where Housing 2030 will help to define *what* needs to be done to address the housing crisis, the development of a housing organizational plan will help to answer the question of *how* RI can best achieve its goals and implement its strategies:

- What structure at the state level will allow us to maximize efforts and resources across entities?
- How can we as a state continue to iterate to ensure the core capacity of each entity is being leveraged and clarify the roles and responsibilities across entities?

Housing Organizational Plan Approach

Three principles are guiding how the Department will undertake development of this housing organizational plan:

1. **Build on previous efforts:** There has been significant work done to review and consider the best approach for governance of housing functions in Rhode Island. This report will build on these efforts, not start from scratch. Recent efforts include:
 - Boston Consulting Group Report, 2022
 - Visualizing RI’s Ecosystem, 2022
 - Housing Department Governance Report, 2022
 - Previous Legislative Proposals, SFY 2021 and 2022
 - State Comprehensive Plans
 - Strategic Plans
2. **Frame opportunities and trade-offs for consideration:** The Department is not coming to this process with pre-defined answers; we are going to ask many questions throughout this process, with the goal of framing opportunities and their tradeoffs.
3. **Iterative approach:** The Department will continually provide updates on the report and have a process of iteration to ensure ongoing stakeholder engagement and input.

Housing Organizational Plan Process

The development of the housing organizational plan will occur in four phases.

Summary of Report Process				
	August/September	October	November	December
Process Step	Landscape analysis	Opportunity and Criteria Definition	Develop and Review Governance Options	Refine and Recommend
Key Question	What is the current status of housing-related functions?	What are the challenges/ opportunities that governance can address? What are criteria of success?	How effectively do different governance options address those challenges/opportunities?	What are the emerging top options?
Process Inputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey for departments, quasi-publics, commissions, and boards • State Housing Planning • Resident survey • Stakeholder interviews • Review of recent reports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerging findings from state housing planning process and resident survey • Stakeholder interviews and focus groups • National best practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National best practices • Proposed options from prior reports • Stakeholder input • Input from departments, quasi-publics, commissions, and boards 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stakeholder input • Discussions with departments, quasi-publics, commissions, and boards

Landscape Analysis: Purpose, Approach & Process

Landscape Analysis Purpose

The goal of the landscape analysis phase of the housing organizational plan is to:

1. Review, analyze, and assess the current status of housing-related functions

2. Identify what is working well and what are opportunities for improvement in the current governance model

It is important to emphasize that the landscape analysis is looking at systems and structures, and how those systems and structures either support or impede housing functions. The identified opportunities for improvement will inform the future phases of this process by defining what problems need to be addressed.

Of note, a critical strength of Rhode Island's housing ecosystem that came through in every part of the process is the exceptional people working in this field—the dedicated professionals inside and outside of government and volunteers whose commitment to addressing housing and homelessness represents the state's greatest asset. This landscape analysis aims to identify structural gaps and opportunities for enhancement while preserving and further supporting these professionals. Feedback is welcome on these preliminary findings, as our intent is to prioritize identifying areas for improvements, rather than disrupting the critical work already underway.

Landscape Analysis Approach

In the 2023 Housing Supply and Homelessness in Rhode Island, prepared for the RI Foundation by the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), BCG identified four functions across six policy areas that housing departments may perform:

- **Functions:** Strategy, Enforcement, Programs, and Data Tracking
- **Policy areas:** housing development, housing affordability, housing preservation, individual/family supports, climate/safety, and homelessness

We iterated on this framework to conduct the by-function review of the current state of housing governance, updating the policy areas to include:

1. **Housing Development:** Housing development relates to activities that help to build, redevelop, and produce new housing. Broadly defined, this policy area includes but is not limited to, land use; construction; financing; permitting; infrastructure; predevelopment; land assembly and disposition; etc.
2. **Homeownership:** Homeownership relates to activities such as financing homeownership or supporting individuals or families in becoming homeowners. Examples include financing mortgages; marketing and brokering real estate; down payment assistance; financial literacy; homeowner education; assessing homeownership data; etc.
3. **Housing affordability and access:** Housing affordability and access relates to activities that focus on ensuring housing is affordable for households and that households have the supports they need to access and maintain stable housing. This may include activities related to housing vouchers; housing navigation support; state or federal programs to maintain housing (e.g., LIHEAP); landlord-tenant relationships; eviction prevention; monitoring deed restrictions; financing related to affordability requirements; tracking data on housing affordability; etc.
4. **Specialized housing:** Specialized housing relates to housing that is for specific populations or purposes, such as Assisted Living facilities, Transitional Housing, Recovery Housing, etc.
5. **Preservation, health, and safety of existing housing stock:** Preservation relates to ensuring existing housing remains in good repair and available for habitation. For

example, managing home repair programs; healthy housing (e.g., lead, mold, asbestos); building inspections; enforcement of code requirements; etc.

6. **Climate and energy:** This area includes areas such as climate resilience, climate adaptation, renewable energy, energy infrastructure, energy efficiency/use related to housing.
7. **Homelessness:** Homelessness includes activities related to addressing homelessness, including prevention, intervention, and planning activities.

Landscape Analysis Process

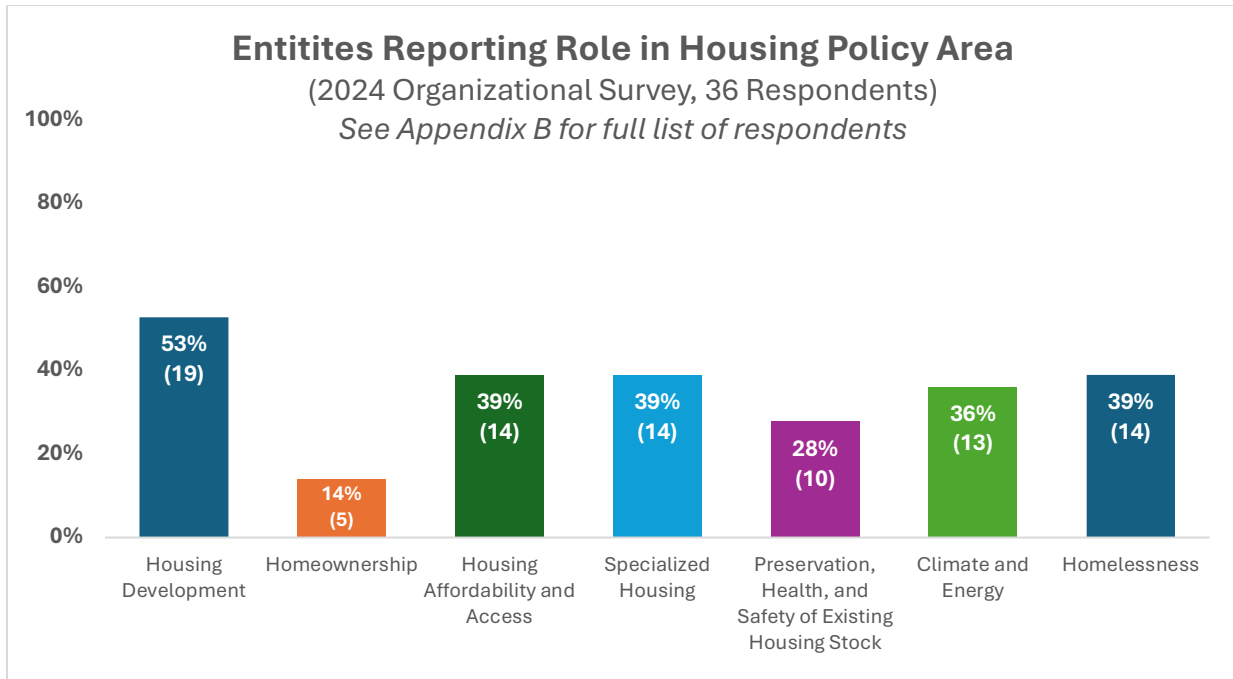
This landscape analysis includes a detailed review of organizational survey results, state statute, prior report findings, and stakeholder interviews. The following sources were reviewed as part of the process of compiling information and perspectives on the existing housing governance landscape. A comprehensive list of all sources included in the Landscape Analysis can be found in **Appendix B**.

- **Survey of state departments, quasi-public agencies, commissions, and boards:** There were 36 survey responses received as of November 2024.
- **Stakeholder survey:** There were four stakeholder survey responses received.
- **Stakeholder interviews:** 12 individual stakeholder interviews were conducted.
- **Review of existing reports:** Five reports were reviewed for analysis and inputs of current landscape and gaps/opportunities.
- **Review of existing statutes:** Five statutes were reviewed.

All of the above sources were analyzed by policy area and by function. Findings from across sources were synthesized to generate emerging analysis for each policy area. Detailed qualitative data is compiled in **Appendix A** within the landscape analysis to ensure that all readers have an opportunity to review the underlying inputs that led to the emerging analysis.

Emerging Analysis

Currently, many state departments, quasi-public agencies, boards, and commissions (together “housing entities”) are involved in each function and policy area, demonstrating the complexity of the current landscape. Where some policy areas – such as housing development, housing affordability and access, specialized housing, and homelessness – have many entities involved, others such as homeownership have less engagement.



A summary of preliminary findings within each policy area is included below. Across all policy areas, a few general themes emerged:

1. The current governance structure is fragmented – the delineation of roles and responsibilities amongst entities is unclear and often duplicative -- both in statute and in practice. Stakeholders identified the need for centralizing authority and resources to align efforts across all housing policy areas and enable proactive policymaking and innovation, with the Department of Housing serving as a primary facilitator among agencies.
2. It is unclear how organizations are related to each other to create cohesion and clarity in the function of housing development – for example, the Department of Housing and RIHousing do not have a formal statutory relationship, except for the Department’s charge to ‘oversee all housing activities.’ While the Department staffs the Housing Resources Commission (HRC), the Department and HRC similarly do not have a statutory relationship.
3. Several entities are charged with developing strategic plans for housing and for homelessness, but each plan has slightly different purposes and the interconnection and enforceability of the plans is unclear. As a result, programs and financing are not being implemented in a cohesive manner, potentially limiting the impact of the state’s resources.
4. Entities are not structured or resourced optimally to achieve their goals. The Department of Housing has limited formal or informal structures to coordinate across housing and homelessness programs managed by other state agencies to fulfill its charge as the lead agency for housing, homelessness, and community development. The HRC in its current state is not optimally structured to execute on its broad mandate (of note, the Department and HRC have highly duplicative statutory roles). Resource gaps in staffing and funding are preventing entities from effectively executing their missions. Among other things,

these resourcing challenges lead to long wait times for permitting, funding, and support, which in turn impedes municipalities, developers, and others from advancing their projects.

5. Data is dispersed across agencies and programs, making it difficult to have a comprehensive picture of housing and homelessness gaps and opportunities. Currently, many entities are required to produce regular reports, but the utility of these reports to drive policymaking is unclear. Enhanced data sharing between state agencies, community organizations, and boards and commissions could reduce duplicative work while providing a more comprehensive view of overall housing needs.
6. The complexity of the current ecosystem – where authority and responsibility for policy and programs are dispersed across many entities – makes it difficult to track information or processes. Stakeholders noted that this can lead to a sense of low government transparency and accountability. In addition, the dispersion of responsibility limits effective, regular communication and feedback opportunities about policies and programs, as it is unclear which entities are responsible for proactive communication of which opportunities.

Emerging Analysis by Policy Area

1. Housing Development

- The relationship between various planning functions is unclear, including the hierarchy of plans, the responsibility and authority for creating plans, the authority to require adherence to the plan, and the responsibility for implementing the plan. As a result, it is unclear where priorities are being set and how those priorities translate into policy and financing decisions. This leads to a dispersion of responsibility and misalignment in program priorities based on where a program/financing stream is situated. For example, the Qualified Allocation Plan (QAP) by statute is supposed to align to the State Guide Plan Element for housing, but there has not been a state housing plan adopted as the state guide plan element since 2006. While the Department of Housing is developing a new one currently (Housing 2030), it is unclear how the QAP will be reviewed and approved to support alignment to the new guide plan element. In addition, the Housing Resources Commission (HRC) is charged with broad strategic planning responsibilities, which are duplicative with the Department's strategic planning responsibilities.
- There is significant overlap in the statutes between several organizations, creating duplication of responsibility and lack of clarity of "who's on first." In particular:
 - Strategic Planning & Policy
 - Both the Department of Housing and Housing Resources Commission are tasked with developing state housing plans and policies
 - The Housing Resources Commission and Statewide Planning both have roles in the State Guide Plan for housing
 - Multiple entities (Department of Housing, HRC, RIHousing) must ensure their activities align with the State Guide Plan
 - Coordination Role
 - Both Department of Housing and Housing Resources Commission are given broad mandates to coordinate housing activities across state agencies

- Department of Housing is designated as "lead agency" while HRC is tasked with "coordination of state housing functions"
- Both are supposed to coordinate with municipalities and other state departments
- Housing Development & Financing
 - Both RIHousing and Department of Housing have authority to acquire property and accept federal funds
 - RIHousing and the Housing Resources Commission (via the Housing Production Fund) both have roles in housing production and rehabilitation
 - Multiple entities can provide technical assistance to municipalities
- Data Collection & Reporting
 - Both Department of Housing, Housing Resources Commission, and RIHousing have research and reporting duties
 - Multiple entities collect and maintain housing-related data, with some overlap in metrics tracked
- Currently, development financing is available across several entities and a developer seeking to build affordable housing must navigate multiple separate processes. Organizations have worked to coordinate – especially in recent years – to do joint solicitations for programs or align timelines to minimize the burden on applicants, such as the joint funding rounds between RIHousing and the Department of Housing. While this structure has some benefits – such as providing varying opportunities for developers and checks and balances within the system – overall, the dispersion of programs and varying timelines, rules, processes, and governance creates a confusing experience for users. Varying roles within the system can also create potential conflicts of interest, making it difficult to convene review committees. In addition, the varying priorities of these funding streams seems to reflect organizational priorities rather than a comprehensive strategy for the state.
- Housing development programs are dispersed across entities based on the history of when the programs came into existence and which entities were able to administer them at the time. There is opportunity in this housing organizational plan to define a more intentional approach going forward to the placement and/or governance of programs within the state structure so that programs that should be mutually reinforcing, braided/blended, or administered collectively sit together.
- Both the Department of Housing and RIHousing offer development-focused technical assistance programs for municipalities. Aligning these efforts could create a more robust municipal engagement platform and reduce complexity for municipalities seeking support from state government.
- Data is dispersed across agencies and programs, making it difficult to have a comprehensive picture of housing development gaps, opportunities, progress, and type to inform policymaking.

2. Homeownership

- Where other policy areas have several entities involved in ways that are duplicative, homeownership has many fewer entities involved (14% of survey respondents). Various

homeowner programs are owned by different entities: RIHousing provides mortgages, down payment assistance, and counseling; HRC funds counseling programs (administered by RIHousing); and Department of Housing funds home repair programs.

- Homeownership is an important goal for the state, but in current statute and practice, there are not clearly defined roles and responsibilities, goals, or implementation strategies. There is an opportunity to more clearly identify and support innovative homeownership models and address proactive policy needs (i.e. re expansion of condos), etc. Across respondents, there is limited capacity or functions focused on foreclosure prevention or supports.
- Current digital infrastructure is lacking, presenting challenges both from a usability perspective for individuals and families seeking homeownership resources, as well as from a data collection and reporting standpoint as a way to measure program efficacy and inform future program development.

3. Housing Affordability and Access

- Housing affordability and access has similar challenges to housing development. There is fragmentation across state agencies, boards, and commissions with an unclear delineation of roles, and both the Department of Housing and the HRC are statutorily responsible for interagency/stakeholder coordination. This disconnect leads to information gaps, inefficient provision of programs, and fragmented service delivery. There is limited authority for incentivizing and/or enforcing housing affordability goals for municipalities across the state. Coordination with municipalities and public housing authorities is limited and ad-hoc.
- There may be additional opportunities to leverage technology to centralize and streamline processes for both employees and clients.
- Many priority populations – such as seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, etc. – are struggling to access affordable housing that meets their needs. However, there has historically been a gap in capacity or authority to convene partners and stakeholders to develop and implement a comprehensive plan to address these gaps. Stakeholder interviews note this as a role for the Department of Housing to fulfill.
- Clients often encounter multiple entry points into the housing system and are required to provide the same information to various agencies.
- Many entities are funding housing supports and housing navigation, but those efforts may be fragmented and resources available to clients may depend on which ‘door’ the client enters through due to a lack of coordination across entities. In particular, the Department of Human Services (DHS) notes a significant role in housing supports and navigation, as does RIHousing, RICoC, the HRC, and Department of Housing through the Consolidated Homelessness Fund.

4. Specialized Housing

- The current structure of specialized housing programs has many gaps, for example in transitional housing services, leaving populations ineligible for supports. Additionally, individuals and families experiencing urgent or unexpected housing challenges/needs may face barriers in accessing timely assistance. More coordinated policy development

could ensure a continuum of services. This could include a review of current programs and eligibility criteria to identify areas for strengthened coordination or enhancements.

- State agencies that identify the needs for specialized housing and regulate specialized housing (for example, nursing homes or recovery housing) are often not directly building or financing the development of that housing. As a result, data, policy, and financing for development and ongoing operations needs to be coordinated across a broader set of partners than traditional market rate or affordable housing development requires. The current system makes this type of coordination difficult, as many entities must be involved and align policy and resources for development and operations.

5. Preservation, Health, and Safety of Existing Housing Stock

- Similar to other housing policies areas, there are ongoing workforce and resource challenges within some agencies. Limited capacity combined with reactive responses to immediate housing needs impacts the ability to develop strategic, long-term solutions and meet housing objectives.
- Several agencies are engaged in regulatory oversight of health and safety, including the Department of Business Regulation, Department of Health, and the Department of Environmental Management. The HRC has statutory responsibility for lead hazard mitigation, which it has delegated to the Department of Health via MOU. There are regulatory gaps, as the Department of Health does not have authority over one- and two-family homes for asbestos or authority for regulating radon in any residential dwelling. There may be opportunities to reduce fragmentation and streamline regulatory oversight.
- Coordination and advancement of state priorities in preservation of federally assisted affordable housing is complicated by the regulatory requirements and encumbrances of federal agencies which are generally administered through contracts between HUD and the state's 25 public housing authorities without involvement by other entities bearing responsibility for housing preservation. With over 38,000 units of federally assisted housing in the state this federal precedence has a considerable impact.

6. Climate and Energy

- The state could benefit from enhanced coordination and strategic planning that integrates climate and energy considerations, clearly defining roles and responsibilities across agencies and stakeholders for coordinated implementation.

7. Homelessness

- The current organizational structure and relationship between agencies/entities is unclear, contains potential redundancies, and presents administrative and authority challenges, suggesting a need to review and realign roles and responsibilities. For example, while the Department of Housing is statutorily the “lead agency on homelessness” and operates the Consolidated Homelessness Fund, the RI Continuum of Care is based in RIHousing and its governance charter includes bringing funding decisions to the Housing Resources Commission for ratification. Similar to other policy areas, several entities have overlapping responsibilities to develop strategic plans for homelessness: the Department of Housing, the Interagency Council on Homelessness, and the RI Continuum of Care. These plans are currently out of date or under development, and there is currently no

mechanism for ensuring alignment across these plans or that the strategies are reflected in policy and funding decisions.

- Clients may be working with several caseworkers simultaneously from various programs from Health and Human Services agencies and homelessness services. Several stakeholders noted the potential role of the Interagency Council on Homelessness, which has not met in several years, to support increased collaboration.
- The current data collection processes are fragmented, with agencies/entities collecting different metrics related to homelessness and housing insecurity. Integrating and centralizing data across the multiple sources that allows for more rapid self-serve analytics could support real-time data sharing, trend analysis, and program evaluation across agencies and stakeholders.

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Phase 2: Initial Opportunity Criteria

From the emerging analysis, initial opportunity criteria have emerged for what a successful housing organizational plan would entail:

- **Ensuring role clarity: Reduce complexity for system users and establish clear roles, responsibilities, and relationships among housing and homelessness entities.**
 - Clarify roles and responsibilities, beginning with areas of statutory duplication and then identifying gaps and defining decision-making processes.
 - Modernize statutes to reflect organizational structure, scopes, and constitutional realities.
 - Establish governance structures that prevent conflicts of interest, align with best practices, and streamline communication with municipalities, providers, developers, clients, and other key stakeholders
 - Clarify and/or develop mechanisms for municipal partnership and coordination.
- **Being proactive, not reactive: Boost proactive and coordinated planning, program evaluation, innovation, and data activities.**
 - Strengthen strategic planning processes, ensuring that strategic plans are kept up to date.
 - Clarify coordination of and accountability for strategic planning functions and policymaking, including hierarchy and relationship among strategic plans.
 - Enhance data sharing, collaboration, and reporting between state agencies, community organizations, and boards and commissions to reduce duplicative work while providing a more comprehensive view of overall housing needs in the state.
 - Establish program evaluation process with performance metrics to track progress, identify bottlenecks, and inform process improvements.
 - Ensure meaningful role for stakeholders in planning processes and policy development.
- **Maximizing resources and streamlining operations: Ensure alignment in budgets, financing, and programs and state entities' work on housing and homelessness.**
 - Coordinate or consolidate budget processes to strengthen alignment with statewide strategy and policy goals.
 - Coordinate or consolidate program application processes and program requirements to ensure funding sources are effectively leveraged and minimize complexity for applicants.
 - Address resource gaps in staffing and funding to ensure housing organizations can effectively execute their missions.
- **Ensuring transparency and accountability: Clarify and streamline processes and systems for decision-making.**
 - Align responsibility and authority across housing policy areas.
 - Develop clear frameworks that empower stakeholders with the tools and resources they need to engage meaningfully.
 - Standardize metrics for evaluating success of the housing and homelessness systems.

Appendix A: Landscape Analysis by Policy Area

Policy Area 1: Housing Development

Policy Area Overview: Housing development relates to activities that help to build, redevelop, and produce new housing. Broadly defined, this policy area includes but is not limited to, land use; construction; financing; permitting; infrastructure; predevelopment; land assembly and disposition; etc.

Review of Organizational Survey Responses:

53% of respondents (19/36) noted they had a role in Housing Development Strategy/Planning:

- **Department of Housing:** The Department of Housing is the state's lead agency for housing, homelessness, and community development in the state of Rhode Island.
 - The Department has statutory authority for developing a statewide housing plan. The Department has contracted with a team that includes Abt Global, the RI League of Cities and Towns, Root Policy, and Housing Works RI to develop a housing plan for the State of Rhode Island.
 - The Department collaborates with and assists municipalities. It has conducted significant municipal engagement around housing development, including meeting individually with all 39 cities and towns as part of the development of the state housing plan. The Department has hired a Chief of Municipal Planning & Programming who serves as a liaison with municipalities regarding their housing issues and devises and operates municipal assistance programs to address them.
 - The Department's team has collaborated with RI Housing on the development of the qualified allocation plan (QAP) and is partnering on the upcoming 5-year consolidated plan for HUD. The Department works alongside RI Housing to support their MTAP program and Proactive Development function.
 - The Department is responsible for producing and making recommendations in the annual integrated housing report.
 - The Department also develops budget and legislative proposals and works with DOA, OMB, and Governor's Office staff to advance such proposals. Annually, similar to all executive branch public agencies, the Department proposes constrained and unconstrained budget initiatives and is incorporated into the Governor's budget.
 - Department staff monitors and collaborates with the General Assembly, including through its many commissions (e.g. Land Use Commission, Landlord Tenant Commission, Housing Affordability Commission, Short-term Rental Commission, Planners Education Commission, etc.).
 - The Department is also developing tools to further the implementation of the state housing plan. These include conducting a study of the impact of housing development on municipal school costs, developing a toolkit and trainings for municipal officials, developing a visualization tool to help build support for housing development.

APPENDIX A
POLICY AREA 1: HOUSING DEVELOPMENT
DRAFT WORKING DOCUMENT

- The Department funds and provides staff support for the HRC. This includes monitoring and reporting on the HRC’s budget, staffing any strategy, planning and policy efforts, as well as organizing and conducting the Commission’s monthly meetings, as well as additional budget and planning meetings.
- The Department is also represented on the statewide planning council and is a member of the interagency Olmstead coordination team.
- The Secretary of Housing is a Cabinet position and is engaged in the Governor’s Cabinet to support interagency coordination and collaboration on strategy and policy.
- The Department receives the Vacant Schools list from RIDE and investigates these and other properties for adaptive reuse and development opportunities.
- The Department constantly seeks to improve data and permitting systems and supports the development of statewide e-permitting, GIS, and other information systems.
- The Department was charged by the legislature with developing a housing organizational plan that includes a review, analysis, and assessment of functions related to housing of all state departments, quasi-publics, boards, and commissions.
- **HRC:** By statute (RIGL 42-128), the HRC is “an agency within the executive department with responsibility for developing plans, policies, standards, ... for housing,” and the purposes of the HRC include to “develop and promulgate state policies, and plans, for housing and housing production...” and to “coordinate activities among state agencies and political subdivisions pertaining to housing.” The HRC has statutory authority (RIGL 42-128-8.1) for developing a strategic plan for housing.
- **HRC Coordinating Committee:**
 - The Coordinating Committee is charged in statute (RIGL 42-128-2) with developing and implementing a memorandum of agreement describing the fiscal and operational relationship between the Rhode Island housing and mortgage finance corporation and the Rhode Island housing resources commission.
 - Per RIGL 42-128-2.1, the Housing Production Fund is administered by RI Housing subject to guidelines established by the Housing Resources Coordinating Committee. The Housing Resources Coordinating Committee has approved guidelines for these funds to support municipal initiatives which have resulted in the municipal technical assistance program, gap financing for capital projects, and operating subsidy for extremely low-income housing. The Coordinating Committee does not deploy programs and financing, but rather offers policy and reporting guidelines for the deployment of these funds.
 - The Coordinating Committee is also statutorily assigned a significant role in the Housing Incentives for Municipalities program (see RIGL 42-128.3). The Housing Production Fund authorizing language (for which the coordinating committee promulgates guidelines) also references funds being allocated for this program’s purposes.
- **RI Housing:** Development of Consolidated Plan and QAP
- **Department of Administration:** The Division of Planning supports the planning function.
- **RI Commerce Corporation:** Finance projects.

APPENDIX A
POLICY AREA 1: HOUSING DEVELOPMENT
DRAFT WORKING DOCUMENT

- **RI Department of Labor and Training:** Investments via Real Jobs RI into sector-based industry trainings in construction.
- **Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA):** Advocates for smart growth and transit-oriented development (TOD) to increase housing supply near transit service.
- **I-195 Redevelopment District:** The District has a goal to develop 1,000 additional residential units to support its growing innovation district.
- **Department of Business Regulation:** Adoption of national model building codes relative to residential construction and administration of the statewide e-permitting program.
- **EOHHS:** EOHHS is not directly responsible for housing development activities such as construction or land use, but maintains a critical role in shaping the development of housing through the integration of health and human services into housing planning and policy. EOHHS collaborates with the Department of Housing, housing authorities, and developers to ensure new housing developments address the needs of vulnerable populations. EOHHS influences housing development strategies by advocating and supporting the integration of health and supportive services in housing initiatives, pilots, and projects. EOHHS works to support policies that ensure new housing projects are accessible and affordable for populations that require health-related services, particularly through community-based models of care.
- **Quonset Development Corporation:** Work with a developer to construct workforce housing at the Quonset Business Park.
- **Coastal Resources Management Group:** Coastal resources and environmental regulatory programs that balance development with such management.

Programs/Financing:

- **Department of Housing:** By statute, the Secretary of Housing shall be responsible for overseeing all housing initiatives in the state of Rhode Island.
 - The Department is responsible for implementing the proposed housing and community development bond (pending voter approval) and for entering into funding agreements with other agencies and partners involved in implementing bond funded initiatives.
 - Additionally, the Department has oversight of the state LIHTC, CDBG, the Transit Oriented Development Pilot Program, and multiple SFRF-funded planning and financing initiatives. This includes programs generating new projects in the pipeline, such as the Municipal Infrastructure Grant program and Transit Oriented Development Technical Assistance program, as well as programs producing and preserving housing, such as Home Repair, Permanent Supportive Housing Crossroads, Priority Projects Fund, and Transit Oriented Development. The Department also enters into subaward agreements for additional housing programs such as Affordable Housing Predevelopment, Housing Related Infrastructure, Proactive Housing Development, Public Housing Authority Program, Site Acquisition, Development of Affordable Housing (I&II) Community Revitalization Program, and the Middle-Income Program. These sub awarded programs are administered by RI Housing and the RI Infrastructure Bank.

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POLICY AREA 1: HOUSING DEVELOPMENT
DRAFT WORKING DOCUMENT

- The Department has also contracted to conduct A&E evaluations for facilities to determine the feasibility of adaptive reuse projects.
- The Department runs the Community Development Block Grant, which supports non-entitlement communities to have access to funding for community development activities, including but not limited to housing development.
- The Department runs programs assisting municipalities in their planning and capacity-building efforts, including the Municipal Fellows program. This program has been funded with SFRF to date. The Department also collaborates with RI Housing regarding the Municipal Technical Assistance Program which has been funded with Housing Production Funds.
- **HRC:** By statute (RIGL 42-128), the HRC is “an agency within the executive department with responsibility for ... programs and providing technical assistance for housing,” and the relevant purposes of the HRC include RIGL 42-128-5(3)-(9). Through the Housing Resources Commission restricted receipt account, the HRC has funded the development of new housing including predevelopment assistance and funding the Extremely Low-Income Capital and Operating programs. Through bond funds, the HRC has funded affordable housing developments through the Building Homes Rhode Island program.
- **RIHousing:** Administers state and federal financing programs and provides financing through RIHousing resources. CRMC has no financing programs nor financial assistance.
- **Department of Environmental Management:** Some brownfields grant funds for site predevelopment work.
- **I-195 Redevelopment District:** The Commission has used its incentive fund, I-195 Project Fund, to close financing gaps and incentivize affordable housing.
- **Department of Business Regulation:** Administration of the statewide e-permitting program within the State Building Office, which facilitates the utilization of a uniform, online permitting building permit system at the municipal level across Rhode Island.
- **EOHHS:**
 - Pathways to Removing Obstacles (PRO) Housing Grant: Through the RI Department of Housing, EOHHS via the Health Equity Zones (HEZ) received a PRO grant as a sub recipient to work on the elimination of barriers to the development of affordable housing at the community level.
 - Olmstead Planning: EOHHS is working across state agencies and with the community to design a plan that complies with the U.S. Supreme Court Olmstead ruling – to have the supports in place for individuals with disabilities to live, work, and receive services in the community in the least restrictive setting permitted by their disabilities.
 - HEZ Community of Practice on Housing Pilot: EOHHS and RIDOH provided training, best practices, and developer resources to reduce local barriers and create a pipeline of supportive and affordable housing projects in a cohort of six HEZ communities.
- **Coastal Resources Management Council:** Coastal resources and environmental regulatory programs that balance development with such management.
- **Public Finance Management Board (Dept. of Treasury):**
 - Allocates federal volume cap to RIHousing so it can sell bonds at a lower rate of interest
 - Allocate state volume cap in conformity with IRS Code section 141(b)

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- Annually the PFMB allocates volume cap to Rhode Island Housing (and local housing authorities, if requested) as well as Rhode Island Student Loan Authority and other entities that are engaged in "Private Business Activities" in order to allow RI Housing to issue bonds on a tax-exempt basis
- **Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission:** The RIHPHC is the administrator of state and federal historic preservation tax credit programs. These incentives are often used to develop housing.
- **Department of Administration:** Divisions within DOA, especially Grants Management and the Pandemic Relief Office, contribute to program financing.
- **Executive Office of Commerce and RI Commerce Corporation:** Via the rebuild Rhode Island tax credit program and First wave fund.

Regulation/Enforcement:

- **HRC:** HRC has statutory responsibility for implementing Chapter 128.2 Expedited Permitting for Affordable Housing which seeks to expedite state agency approvals for housing developments that are deemed a critical concern.
- **RIHousing:** Oversee design and construction of affordable housing and monitor compliance of funded projects with state and federal program requirements.
- **Department of Environmental Management:** Permitting programs for wetlands, septic systems, stormwater, and brownfields
- **I-195 Redevelopment District:** The District is designated as a Special Economic Development District by the General Assembly therefore required to develop a Development Plan, which outlines zoning regulations and enforcement.
- **Department of Business Regulation:** Promulgation of the Rhode Island building codes relative to residential construction, which lay out the framework for building standards statewide.
- **EOHHS:** EOHHS monitors contracts to ensure that funds are being utilized within the terms and allowable uses of the funding sources.
- **Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission:** The RIHPHC reviews any projects that utilize federal or state funding or permits to ensure that historic properties are not adversely affected by the undertaking.

Data:

- **Department of Housing:**
 - The Department is beginning the process of collecting housing data in one place, given that housing data is collected in a dispersed way across state, municipal, and federal government agencies, non-profits, quasi-publics, and private industry. The Department views the collection and presentation of housing data as an essential role and is currently requesting hiring authority to fill an additional data analytics role. Some of the data that the Department frequently analyzes comes from HUD (housing choice vouchers, HIC, and PIT). While other data comes from municipal governments, such as housing units permitted. Other important datasets include the Department of Business Regulation's short-term rental database, the low-mod database, the Zoning Atlas (created by HousingWorks RI), the American Community Survey, and the Census. The Department monitors

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metrics from these data sources to inform policymaking and identify areas of need. Additionally, the Department is currently requesting resources to build out its data infrastructure, improve data collection and data quality. The Department also launched a dashboard showing progress on the usage of the \$332M in State Fiscal Recovery Funds awarded for housing production, preservation, planning, and homelessness. The dashboard is publicly available and updated monthly on the Department's website.

- The Department of Housing is engaged in planning efforts that have significant data needs. The Department is currently developing the state housing plan, with the aim of becoming the new housing guide plan element of the state guide plan. That plan will include new housing goals for the state along with associated metrics that will require routine data collection to measure progress on state goals. The Department also collaborates with RIHousing on the development of the Consolidated Plan for HUD. This is a five-year plan that “help states and local jurisdictions assess their affordable housing and community development needs and market conditions, and make data-driven, placed based investment decisions.”
- As a state agency, the Department also has a role in establishing performance metrics for the State's budget/performance management process under the Department of Administration. To date performance metrics have focused on progress implementing SFRF funded initiatives. Additional performance metrics are being developed through the development of the state housing plan.
- Additionally, the Department of Housing is required to produce several reports for the Governor, legislature, and public. The reports all require the collection and presentation of housing related data. These reports are included below:
- § 42-64.19-3(a)(4)(iv): Annual integrated housing report - Annual report on a broad range of housing metrics, includes a requirement to project the units needed for the state, and receive data from municipalities.
- § 45-53-12(b): Fee in Lieu and Public Housing Report – Annual report on the fees in lieu of the development of affordable housing collected by municipalities and the utilization of vouchers by Public Housing Authorities.
- § 45-24-76: Accessory Dwelling Unit Annual Report – Annual report on the number of ADUs permitted and provided Certificates of Occupancy in the past two years by municipality along with any ADU related ordinances enacted by each municipality.
- § 45-53-11: Low and Moderate Income Housing Annual Comprehensive Permit Report – Annual report on the status of comprehensive permit applications, including the number of units built and provided Certificates of Occupancy, by municipality.
- § 44-71-10: State Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Report – Annual report on the amount of state funded low-income housing tax credit agreements entered into in the previous year.
- § 45-53-10: Vacant Schools Annual Report – Annual report on the number of vacant schools in Rhode Island and the status of redevelopment efforts to convert vacant schools into affordable housing.

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- Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) - Annual report required by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development providing accomplishments and progress on Consolidated Plan goals.
- **HRC:** Per statute (RIGL 42-128), the HRC’s purposes include “to develop and promulgate... performance measures for housing programs established pursuant to state law.” HRC completes an annual report, available via the RI Housing website and is also statutorily charged with collaborating with the Department of Housing on its annual integrated housing report.
- **RIHousing:** Data on developments financed by RIHousing and an annual update of 10% chart.
- **I-195 Redevelopment District:** The Commission maintains data on residential units in the 195 District.
- **Department of Business Regulation:** Collects data through the e-permitting system.
- **EOHHS:** EOHHS tracks data for populations served through Medicaid, and other state programs within the Ecosystem. Additional data may include HMIS and vendor reporting. EOHHS monitors contract deliverables, outcomes, and tracking the utilization of state resources allocated for housing initiatives.
- **Coastal Resources Management Council:** Number of permits that can be attributed to residential development projects within the agency's jurisdiction.

Review of Current State Statute:

Strategy/Planning:

- Department of Housing:
(§ 42-64.34-1.)
 - The Secretary of Housing shall (ii) Be responsible for overseeing all housing initiatives in the state of Rhode Island and developing a housing plan, including, but not limited to, the development of affordable housing opportunities to assist in building strong community efforts and revitalizing neighborhoods.
 - Coordinate with all agencies directly related to any housing initiatives and participate in the promulgation of any regulation having an impact on housing including, but not limited to, the Rhode Island housing and mortgage finance corporation, the coastal resources management council (CRMC), and state departments including, but not limited to: the department of environmental management (DEM), the department of business regulation (DBR), the department of transportation (DOT) and statewide planning, and the Rhode Island housing resources commission.
- (§ 42-64.34-2.)
 - The department of housing shall be the state’s lead agency for housing, homelessness, and community development in the state of Rhode Island.
 - To serve as the governor’s chief advisor and liaison to federal policymakers on housing, homelessness, and community development as well as the principal point of contact on any such related matters;
 - To coordinate the housing, homelessness, and community development programs of the state of Rhode Island and its departments, agencies, commissions, corporations, and subdivisions;
- Housing Resources Commission:

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(§ 42-128-5. Purposes.)

- To coordinate activities among state agencies and political subdivisions pertaining to housing.
- To encourage public-private partnerships that foster the production, rehabilitation, development, maintenance, and improvement of housing and housing conditions, especially for low and moderate income people.
- To foster and support no-profit organizations, including community development corporations, and their associations and intermediaries, that are engaged in providing and housing related services.
- To encourage and support partnerships between institutions of higher education and neighborhoods to develop and retain quality, healthy housing and sustainable communities.
- To facilitate private for-profit production and rehabilitation of housing for diverse populations and income groups.
- To develop and promulgate state policies, and plans, for housing and housing production...

(§ 42-128-8. Powers and duties.)

- Policy, planning, and coordination of state housing functions, including: To prepare and adopt the state's plans for housing; provided, however, that this provision shall not be interpreted to contravene the prerogative of the state planning council to adopt a state guide plan for housing. To prepare, adopt, and issue the state's housing policy. To advise the governor and general assembly on housing issues and to coordinate housing activities among government agencies and agencies created by state law or providing housing services under government programs.

(§ 42-128-8.1. Housing production and rehabilitation.)

- Strategic plan. The commission, in conjunction with the statewide planning program, shall develop by July 1, 2006, a five-year (5) strategic plan for housing, which plan shall be adopted as an element of the state guide plan, and which shall include quantified goals, measurable intermediate steps toward the accomplishment of the goals, implementation activities, and standards for the production and/or rehabilitation of year-round housing to meet the housing needs including, but not limited to, the following:
 - Guidelines. The commission shall advise the state planning council and the state planning council shall promulgate and adopt not later than July 1, 2006, guidelines for higher density development, including, but not limited to: (1) Inclusionary zoning provisions for low- and moderate-income housing with appropriate density bonuses and other subsidies that make the development financially feasible; and (2) Mixed-use development that includes residential development, which guidelines shall take into account infrastructure availability; soil type and land capacity; environmental protection; water supply protection; and agricultural, open space, historical preservation, and community development pattern constraints.

(§ 42-128-4. Rhode Island housing resources commission.)

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- The Rhode Island housing resources commission shall be an agency within the executive department with responsibility for developing plans, policies, standards and programs and providing technical assistance for housing.
- Statewide Planning:
(§ 42-11-10. Statewide planning program.)
 - State guide plan. Components of strategic plans prepared and adopted in accordance with this section may be designated as elements of the state guide plan. The state guide plan shall be comprised of functional elements or plans dealing with land use; physical development and environmental concerns; economic development; housing production; energy supply, including the development of renewable energy resources in Rhode Island, and energy access, use, and conservation; human services; climate change and resiliency; and other factors necessary to accomplish the objective of this section. The state guide plan shall be a means for centralizing, integrating, and monitoring long-range goals, policies, plans, and implementation activities related thereto. State agencies concerned with specific subject areas, local governments, and the public shall participate in the state guide planning process, which shall be closely coordinated with the budgeting process.
- RI Housing
(§ 42-55-5.2. Consistency with plans.)
 - The corporation shall exercise its powers under this chapter in a manner that is consistent on a programmatic basis with the state guide plan, adopted pursuant to § 42-11-10 and with local comprehensive plans, prepared and adopted pursuant to chapter 22.2 of title 45, that have been approved as consistent with the state guide plan.

Programs/Financing:

- Department of Housing:
(§ 42-64.34-2. Powers and duties.)
 - To purchase, receive, lease, or otherwise acquire, own, hold, improve, use, and otherwise deal in and with, real or personal property, or any interest in real or personal property, wherever situated;
 - To accept any gifts or grants or loans of funds or property or financial or other aid in any form from the federal government or any agency or instrumentality of the federal government, or from the state or any agency or instrumentality of the state, or from any other source and to comply, subject to the provisions of this chapter, with the terms and conditions of the gifts, grants, or loans;
- (§ 42-128-2. Rhode Island housing resources agency created.)
 - There is hereby established a restricted receipt account within the general fund of the state. Funds from this account shall be used to provide for housing and homelessness initiatives including housing production, lead hazard abatement, housing rental subsidy, housing retention assistance, and homelessness services and prevention assistance with priority to veterans. Effective December 31, 2024 or after fulfillment of the reporting requirements established under §42-64.34-1(vi), whichever is later, the restricted account established under §42-128-2(3)

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shall be administered by the Department of Housing in consultation with the Housing Resources Commission. Funds in this account will be used in accordance with the uses established in § 42-128-2(3).

- Housing Resources Commission:
(§ 42-128-2. Rhode Island housing resources agency created.)
 - There is hereby established a restricted receipt account within the general fund of the state. Funds from this account shall be used to provide for housing and homelessness initiatives including housing production, lead hazard abatement, housing rental subsidy, housing retention assistance, and homelessness services and prevention assistance with priority to veterans. Effective December 31, 2024 or after fulfillment of the reporting requirements established under §42-64.34-1(vi), whichever is later, the restricted account established under §42-128-2(3) shall be administered by the Department of Housing in consultation with the Housing Resources Commission. Funds in this account will be used in accordance with the uses established in § 42-128-2(3).
- Housing Resources Coordinating Committee:
(§ 42-128-2.1. Housing Production Fund.)
 - There is hereby established a restricted receipt account within the general fund of the state, to be known as the housing production fund. Funds from this account shall be administered by the Rhode Island housing and mortgage finance corporation, subject to program and reporting guidelines adopted by the coordinating committee of the Rhode Island housing resources commission for housing production initiatives
 - Technical and financial assistance for cities and towns to support increased local housing production, including by reducing regulatory barriers and through the housing incentives for municipalities program.
- RIHousing:
(§ 42-55-5.2. Consistency with plans.)
 - The corporation shall exercise its powers under this chapter in a manner that is consistent on a programmatic basis with the state guide plan, adopted pursuant to § 42-11-10 and with local comprehensive plans, prepared and adopted pursuant to chapter 22.2 of title 45, that have been approved as consistent with the state guide plan.

(§ 42-55-5. General powers.)

 - Provide, contract, or arrange for consolidated processing of any aspect of a housing development, housing project, or health care facility in order to avoid duplication thereof by either undertaking that processing in whole or in part on behalf of any governmental agency, or instrumentality of the United States or of this state, or, in the alternative, to delegate the processing in whole or in part to any governmental agency or instrumentality;

(§ 42-55-6. Powers relative to making loans.)

 - Make and participate in the making of grants to assist in the construction, rehabilitation, or operation of residential housing;

(§ 42-55-7. Powers relative to purchase of and sale to mortgage lenders of loans — Loans to mortgage lender.)

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- To invest in, purchase or to make commitments to purchase, and take assignments from mortgage lenders, of notes and mortgages evidencing loans for the construction, rehabilitation, installation of energy saving improvements to, purchase, leasing, or refinancing of housing for persons and families of low and moderate income or health care facilities in this state upon the terms set forth in § 42-55-10;
- (§ 42-55-7.1. Powers relative to acquisition and operation of housing projects.)
- To acquire on either a temporary or long-term basis, in its own name, from any person, joint venture, partnership, trust, association, firm, corporation, municipality, municipal agency or entity, governmental agency, housing sponsor, or other legal entity or combination thereof by grant, purchase, transfer, foreclosure, or otherwise, housing projects or any interest or any option in housing projects, and to sell, assign, exchange, transfer, mortgage, or encumber housing projects or any interest in housing projects and to accomplish any of the foregoing by public or private sale, with or without public bidding, notwithstanding the provisions of other laws;
 - To own, hold, clear, and improve, in its own name, housing projects or any interest in housing projects;
 - To construct, reconstruct, rehabilitate, improve, alter, repair, or provide for the construction, reconstruction, improvement, alteration, or repair of any housing project;
 - To finance the acquisition and operation of housing projects in accordance with the provisions of this chapter; provided, however, that prior to the corporation issuing any obligations, it makes the findings as provided in subdivisions (1), (2), and (4) of § 42-55-12;

Regulation/Enforcement:

- Housing Resources Commission:
(§ 42-128-2. Expedited Permitting for Affordable Housing.)
 - A person may apply to the Rhode Island housing resources commission and request that a project be classified as a project of critical housing concern. Said request shall contain a description of how the project is consistent with applicable provisions of state plans pertaining to affordable housing developments. Not more than five (5) days after the receipt of such request, the chairperson, or the executive director acting on behalf of the chairperson, shall refer the request to statewide planning for review of the probable consistency of the project with the applicable provisions of the state guide plan. The associate director shall issue a determination of probable consistency to the chairperson within twenty (20) days. If the associate director has made a determination of probable consistency, the Rhode Island housing resources commission shall render a written decision on the request within sixty (60) days of the filing and receipt of the request. If the project is found to be a housing project of critical concern, the Rhode Island housing resources commission may issue a certificate of critical housing concern. A certificate of critical housing concern shall expire two (2) years from the date of issuance.
- (§ 42-128-4. Rhode Island housing resources commission.)

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- The Rhode Island housing resources commission shall be an agency within the executive department with responsibility for developing plans, policies, standards and programs and providing technical assistance for housing.
- RIHousing:
 - (§ 42-55-7.1. Powers relative to acquisition and operation of housing projects.)
 - To operate, manage, and control housing projects, in its own name, and to do all things necessary and incidental to the ownership of housing projects, including making rules and regulations;
 - (§ 42-55-8. Supervision of housing sponsors and health care sponsors.)
 - The corporation shall have the power to supervise housing sponsors of multi-family residential housing units and single family residential housing units designed by the sponsor for occupancy primarily by persons and families of low and moderate income or sponsors of health care facilities and their real and personal property in the following respects:

Data:

- Department of Housing:
 - Annual integrated housing report: Annual report on a broad range of housing metrics, includes a requirement to project the units needed for the state, and receive data from municipalities.
 - (§ 42-64.19-3(a)(4)(iv))
 - Fee in Lieu and Public Housing Report: Annual report on the fees in lieu of the development of affordable housing collected by municipalities and the utilization of vouchers by Public Housing Authorities.
 - (§ 45-53-12(b))
 - Accessory Dwelling Unit Annual Report: Annual report on the number of ADUs permitted and provided Certificates of Occupancy in the past two years by municipality along with any ADU related ordinances enacted by each municipality.
 - (§ 45-24-76)
 - Low and Moderate Income Housing Annual Comprehensive Permit Report: Annual report on the status of comprehensive permit applications, including the number of units built and provided Certificates of Occupancy, by municipality.
 - (§ 45-53-11)
 - State Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Report: Annual report on the amount of state funded low-income housing tax credit agreements entered into in the previous year.
 - (§ 44-71-10)
 - Vacant Schools Annual Report: Annual report on the number of vacant schools in Rhode Island and the status of redevelopment efforts to convert vacant schools into affordable housing.
 - (§ 45-53-10)
 - Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER): Annual report required by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development providing accomplishments and progress on Consolidated Plan goals.
- Statewide Planning:

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(§ 42-11-10. Statewide planning program.)

- The division of statewide planning shall manage and administer the Rhode Island geographic information system of land-related resources, and shall coordinate these efforts with other state departments and agencies, including the university of Rhode Island, which shall provide technical support and assistance in the development and maintenance of the system and its associated database.
- Housing Resources Commission:
(§ 42-128-5. Purposes.)
 - To develop and promulgate... performance measures for housing programs established pursuant to state law.
- (§ 42-128-8. Powers and duties.)
 - To conduct research on and make reports regarding housing issues in the state.
- (§ 42-128-8.1. Housing production and rehabilitation.)
 - The statewide planning program shall maintain a geographic information system map that identifies, to the extent feasible, areas throughout the state suitable for higher density residential development consistent with the guidelines adopted pursuant to subsection (g).

Review of Prior Report Findings:

Current system opportunities/gaps:

Boston Consulting Group and The Rhode Island Foundation 2023 Report:

- Housing development has stalled in Rhode Island due to lack of support throughout the development process
- Lack of pro-active pipeline building, technical assistance, and inflexible housing financing has limited housing development
- Within the current ecosystem, no person or party is proactively building a pipeline of potential developments that align with state priorities
- There is limited technical assistance for development activities such as property acquisition, site planning and navigating the permitting/regulatory process
- Developers note that the RI permitting process is complicated and leads to low success, which deters many from pursuing development projects
- RI's current approach to housing financing lacks flexibility, which results in delays in financing and makes the system less attractive for developers
- Current procurement processes are rigid, with no ability to adapt financing applications, which slows down the development process, prevents necessary iteration, and creates uncertainty for developers
- Strictly defined funding buckets make the financing process more complex for developers and limit RI Housing's flexibility to finance projects that align with housing needs

The 2023 RI Integrated Housing Survey:

- There are gaps in publicly available data, as well as at the municipal level. But, there are also gaps in our ability to process and report data reliably and in time to give timely feedback on our progress. Although most of Rhode Island's municipalities responded to the survey conducted for this report, the majority reported that they did not have data that

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were readily available to share on basic attributes of housing production such as the number of building permits issued during 2023 or the number of projects completed. For example, only 16 were able to provide data on the number of housing units permitted.

- Implementing technology solutions. We believe there is an opportunity to build upon and leverage the Department of Business Regulation's e-permitting software to address some of these data gaps, although additional analysis is needed.
- Housing data is not uniformly collected by a single department.
- It will also be important to engage public housing authorities (PHA's) and explore publicly driven development. Such work will enable the leveraging of sometimes underutilized agencies such as PHA's.
- Municipal governments in Rhode Island are vital partners in the work of housing development. Close collaboration will be required to understand specific community needs, develop a shared vision and goals, and develop housing units.
- Opportunities to explore and develop alternative sources of data:
 - Assessing the feasibility of using tax assessor data to quantify existing Rhode Island housing stock

Summary of Stakeholder Input:

Current system strengths:

- Collaboration across entities has been effective at getting funding out, especially through consolidated funding rounds/one-stop process
- Improved reporting on state of housing in recent years
- Multiple bodies with funding for development allows for some checks and balances within the system
- RIHousing has been successful in distributing funds and coordinating multiple funding sources for housing development
- Historically, RIHousing had done a great job in managing/administering programs, like HOME, that would have been within a Department of Housing if the state had had one

Current system opportunities/gaps:

Governance and Strategic Planning

- It is unclear who is setting state policy and how that policy is then driving funding decisions. Authority and responsibility appear to be separated in some instances.
- There is a lack of cohesive, readily available information about how funds are invested across the system and what the return on investment is. This is exacerbated by the many different entities with funding and the varying approaches to governing and awarding those funds.
- It is confusing to navigate the various programs and figure out who is in charge of what.
- There are gaps in coordination with municipalities on how to support development
- As legislation changes, it is unclear who is responsible for communicating those changes to developers and to municipalities.
- There is a deficit in central planning and intergovernmental coordination that aligns with and is driven by a long-term strategy. For example: If there were a master list of state-owned land and/or buildings that may be repurposed into shelter/housing space in the coming 1-3 years, building and fire code reviews could begin well in advance of acute

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needs for use arising. Instead, we find ourselves subject to crisis-driven project demands that inevitably conflict with complicated life-safety considerations and ultimately hold the State back from making progress towards shared objectives. Beyond that, there are obvious and legitimate gaps at present related to data quality, availability, and vintage.

- An updated State Guide Plan element focused on housing will advance the focus on especially affordable housing development at the municipal level by providing realistic goals and strategies with annual reporting and accountability requirements.
 - A more functional and accurate GIS portal will promote access to accurate and continuously updated data to enable optimal site selection efforts for public and private interests (and would align our system with those of our New England neighbors).
- Support for TOD and coordinated/strategic planning has been increasing; this focus and investment should continue (both policy efforts and funding).
- There are significant gaps in the data that make strategic planning and wise investment difficult. Program evaluation is lacking, especially with no guiding strategic plan.

Barriers to Development

- The structure of the current development environment/system creates unintentional barriers to entry for new developers, who have plans and projects but encounter challenges in accessing established networks.
- There is an opportunity to expand support for emerging developers who have potential but need guidance navigating Rhode Island's housing development system.
- Timely application reviews and responses are beneficial to both the regulators and the regulated community. This is the largest gap, as developers, municipalities, parcel owners, etc. simply need to be given answers in a timely fashion.
- An increase in funding that is disbursed more quickly would deliver more housing more quickly.

Workforce and Resources

- There is an opportunity to consolidate state housing development programs under a unified state department, streamlining operations while also excluding some financing mechanisms such as tax credits, HOME, etc.
- Rhode Island will require significantly more construction workers than we currently have to build and preserve the housing we need. This requires investment in workforce training programs to grow this workforce and build on their skills.
- There is simply not enough housing being produced, rental assistance being provided, or services to meet current or future needs.

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Policy Area 2: Homeownership

Policy Area Overview: Homeownership relates to activities such as financing homeownership or supporting individuals or families in becoming homeowners. Examples include financing mortgages; marketing and brokering real estate; down payment assistance; financial literacy; homeowner education; assessing homeownership data; etc.

Review of Organizational Survey Responses:

14% of respondents (5/36) noted they had a role in homeownership

Strategy/Planning:

- **Department of Housing:** The Department and its predecessor entity – the Office of Housing and Community Development -- have worked in concert with other state agencies and federal government actors to support policies that assist existing homeowners (e.g., through the Madeline Walker Act, foreclosure prevention and other programs). The Department is developing program policy and strategy pertaining to the homeownership element in the proposed \$120m housing bond. As homeownership is a top priority of the governor, the department continues to explore additional potential programs to support homeownership.
- **HRC:** Serves as the executive department agency responsible for developing housing policies, plans, and standards per RIGL 42-128. Has statutory authority (RIGL 42-128-8.1) to develop and implement the state's strategic housing plan and coordinate housing activities across state agencies and political subdivisions.
- **HRC Coordinating Committee:** While the Coordinating Committee has not played a significant role in homeownership, the Coordinating Committee's roles in establishing an interagency MOU, establishing guidelines for the housing production fund, and establishing the housing incentives for municipalities program could influence homeownership.
- **RIHousing:** Develops a consolidated plan.

Programs/Financing:

- **Department of Housing:**
 - The Department and its predecessor OHCD have played a role in assisting existing homeowners and helping them stay in their homes. The Department/HRC have a staff member that has worked in concert with other agencies and federal partners to assist existing homeowners. Historically OHCD was involved in foreclosure prevention work in partnership with RIHousing through the Homeowners Assistance Fund (HAF) and programs helping assist homeowners, such as Home Repair, Madeline Walker Act, and efforts in partnership with the Office of Healthy Aging to help Rhode Islanders age in place.
 - The Department is currently deploying a \$4.5 million home repair program through a contracted vendor with SFRF funds.
 - Additionally, the Department has made a grant for a \$500,000 SFRF-supported program for preservation of affordable housing units.

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- The Department will be collaborating to administer the proposed \$20 million allocation for homeownership production through the bond.
- **HRC:**
 - Building Homes Rhode Island program: Funds the development of homeownership opportunities.
 - Consolidated Homelessness Fund: Funds homeownership counseling programs.
- **RIHousing:** Provides mortgages and down payment and closing cost assistance to first time homebuyer, homebuyer counseling, foreclosure prevention counseling/mediation, and mortgage servicing.
- **Public Finance Management Board (Dept. of Treasury):**
 - Allocates federal volume cap to RIHousing so it can sell bonds at a lower rate of interest
 - Allocate state volume cap in conformity with IRS Code section 141(b)
 - Annually the PFMB allocates volume cap to Rhode Island Housing (and local housing authorities, if requested) as well as Rhode Island Student Loan Authority and other entities that are engaged in "Private Business Activities" in order to allow RI Housing to issue bonds on a tax-exempt basis

Regulation/Enforcement:

- **Department of Housing:** The Department of Housing periodically receives complaints pertaining to fair housing and other housing issues related to homeownership. The Department does not have a direct regulatory role. The Department does try to direct constituents to the appropriate agency and/or create web content to direct constituent
- **RIHousing:** Comply with federal and state mortgage financing and loan servicing requirements.

Data:

- **Department of Housing:**
 - The Department is beginning the process of collecting housing data in one place, given that housing data is collected in a dispersed way across state, municipal, and federal government agencies, non-profits, quasi-publics, and private industry. The Department views the collection and presentation of housing data as an essential role and is currently requesting hiring authority to fill an additional data analytics role. Some of the data that the Department frequently analyzes comes from HUD (housing choice vouchers, HIC, and PIT). While other data comes from municipal governments, such as housing units permitted. Other important datasets include the Department of Business Regulation's short-term rental database, the low-mod database, the Zoning Atlas (created by HousingWorks RI), the American Community Survey, and the Census. The Department monitors metrics from these data sources to inform policymaking and identify areas of need. Additionally, the Department is currently requesting resources to build out its data infrastructure, improve data collection and data quality. The Department also launched a dashboard showing progress on the usage of the \$332M in State Fiscal Recovery Funds awarded for housing production, preservation, planning, and homelessness. The dashboard is publicly available and updated monthly on the Department's website.

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- The Department of Housing is engaged in planning efforts that have significant data needs. The Department is currently developing the state housing plan, with the aim of becoming the new housing guide plan element of the state guide plan. That plan will include new housing goals for the state along with associated metrics that will require routine data collection to measure progress on state goals. The Department also collaborates with RIHousing on the development of the Consolidated Plan for HUD. This is a five-year plan that “help states and local jurisdictions assess their affordable housing and community development needs and market conditions, and make data-driven, placed based investment decisions.”
- As a state agency, the Department also has a role in establishing performance metrics for the State’s budget/performance management process under the Department of Administration. To date performance metrics have focused on progress implementing SFRF funded initiatives. Additional performance metrics are being developed through the development of the state housing plan.
- Additionally, the Department of Housing is required to produce several reports for the Governor, legislature, and public. The reports all require the collection and presentation of housing related data. These reports are included below:
- § 42-64.19-3(a)(4)(iv): Annual integrated housing report - Annual report on a broad range of housing metrics, includes a requirement to project the units needed for the state, and receive data from municipalities.
- § 45-53-12(b): Fee in Lieu and Public Housing Report – Annual report on the fees in lieu of the development of affordable housing collected by municipalities and the utilization of vouchers by Public Housing Authorities.
- § 45-24-76: Accessory Dwelling Unit Annual Report – Annual report on the number of ADUs permitted and provided Certificates of Occupancy in the past two years by municipality along with any ADU related ordinances enacted by each municipality.
- § 45-53-11: Low and Moderate Income Housing Annual Comprehensive Permit Report – Annual report on the status of comprehensive permit applications, including the number of units built and provided Certificates of Occupancy, by municipality.
- § 44-71-10: State Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Report – Annual report on the amount of state funded low-income housing tax credit agreements entered into in the previous year.
- § 45-53-10: Vacant Schools Annual Report – Annual report on the number of vacant schools in Rhode Island and the status of redevelopment efforts to convert vacant schools into affordable housing.
- Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) - Annual report required by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development providing accomplishments and progress on Consolidated Plan goals.
- **RIHousing:** Tracks data on mortgage customers and counseling clients.

Review of Current State Statute:

Strategy/Planning:

- Housing Resources Commission:
(§ 42-128-8. Powers and duties)

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- To prepare and adopt the state’s plans for housing; provided, however, that this provision shall not be interpreted to contravene the prerogative of the state planning council to adopt a state guide plan for housing.
- To prepare, adopt, and issue the state’s housing policy.
- To conduct research on and make reports regarding housing issues in the state.
- To advise the governor and general assembly on housing issues and to coordinate housing activities among government agencies and agencies created by state law or providing housing services under government programs.
- Department of Housing:
(§ 42-64.34-2. Powers and duties.)
 - The department of housing shall be the state’s lead agency for housing, homelessness, and community development in the state of Rhode Island.
 - To serve as the governor’s chief advisor and liaison to federal policymakers on housing, homelessness, and community development as well as the principal point of contact on any such related matters;
 - To coordinate the housing, homelessness, and community development programs of the state of Rhode Island and its departments, agencies, commissions, corporations, and subdivisions;

Programs/Financing:

- Housing Resources Commission:
(§ 42-128-8. Powers and duties.)
 - Administer the programs pertaining to housing resources that may be assigned by state law. The commission shall have the power and duty to administer programs for housing, housing services, and community development, including, but not limited to, programs pertaining to: Outreach, education and technical assistance services.
- Housing Resources Coordinating Committee:
(§ 42-128-2.1. Housing Production Fund.)
 - There is hereby established a restricted receipt account within the general fund of the state, to be known as the housing production fund. Funds from this account shall be administered by the Rhode Island housing and mortgage finance corporation, subject to program and reporting guidelines adopted by the coordinating committee of the Rhode Island housing resources commission for housing production initiatives, including:
 - Technical and financial assistance for cities and towns to support increased local housing production, including by reducing regulatory barriers and through the housing incentives for municipalities program.
- RIHousing:
(§ 42-55-5. General powers.)
 - Make and execute contracts with mortgage bankers or other financial institutions in this state for the servicing of mortgages acquired by the corporation pursuant to this chapter, and pay the reasonable value of services rendered to the corporation pursuant to these contracts;
 - Make temporary loans, with or without interest, to eligible housing sponsors of single-family residential housing units to be owned and occupied by the sponsor

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to defray down payment costs and charges on mortgage loans purchased or made by the corporation;

(§ 42-55-6. Powers relative to making loans.)

- Make, undertake commitments to make, and participate in the making of mortgage loans, including without limitation federally insured mortgage loans, and to make temporary loans and advances in anticipation of permanent mortgage loans to housing sponsors or health care sponsors to finance the construction or rehabilitation of, or installation of energy saving improvements to, residential housing designed and planned for occupancy primarily by persons and families of low and moderate income or health care facilities upon the terms and conditions set forth in § 42-55-9;
- Make, undertake commitments to make, and participate in the making of mortgage loans to persons of low or moderate income who may purchase residential housing or who own and occupy residential housing used as security for loans where the proceeds may be dispersed at such time or times that the corporation may determine, including without limitation persons and families of low and moderate income who are eligible or potentially eligible for federally insured mortgage loans or federal mortgage loans. These loans shall be made only after a determination by the corporation that mortgage loans are not otherwise available, wholly or in part, from private lenders upon reasonably equivalent terms and conditions; Establish or expand an existing revolving loan fund, if the housing program sponsor matches the funds, those grants not to exceed one hundred thousand dollars (\$100,000).
- Guaranty “homeowners notes”.

(§ 42-55-7. Powers relative to purchase of and sale to mortgage lenders of loans — Loans to mortgage lender.)

- To invest in, purchase or to make commitments to purchase, and take assignments from mortgage lenders, of notes and mortgages evidencing loans for the construction, rehabilitation, installation of energy saving improvements to, purchase, leasing, or refinancing of housing for persons and families of low and moderate income or health care facilities in this state upon the terms set forth in § 42-55-10;

Regulation/Enforcement:

- Department of Housing:
(§ 42-64.34-2. Powers and duties.)
 - Creation of a written guide for consumers relating to the rights and duties of landlords and tenants pursuant to chapter 18 of title 34, which the secretary shall update at minimum on a biennial basis. The guide shall be posted on the website of the department of housing and shall be published in both English and Spanish.
 - RIHousing:
(§ 42-55-5. General powers.)
 - Make and publish rules and regulations respecting its lending programs and any other rules and regulations that are necessary to effectuate its corporate purposes;
- (§ 42-55-6. Powers relative to making loans.)

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- Make and publish rules and regulations respecting the grant of mortgage loans pursuant to this chapter, the regulation of borrowers, the admission of tenants and other occupants to housing developments pursuant to this chapter, and the construction of ancillary commercial facilities;
- The corporation may promulgate any rules and regulations as may be necessary to implement the homeowners notes program.

Data:

- RIHousing
(§ 42-55-22.2. Fair housing policy reports.)
 - The corporation shall administer all of its programs and activities relating to housing or community development in a manner affirmatively to further the policies of chapter 37 of title 34 (Rhode Island Fair Housing Practices Act). The corporation shall annually report to the general assembly on the measures it has taken affirmatively to further the policies of chapter 37 of title 34. The corporation shall compile a biennial affirmative action report which will indicate the extent of minority participation in the following corporation programs: homeownership programs, home equity conversion mortgage, home repair program, rental housing development, emergency housing assistance.

Review of Prior Report Findings:

Current system opportunities/gaps

The 2023 RI Integrated Housing Survey:

- **Explore strategies to help potential borrowers improve their credit score.** Credit score standards to qualify for mortgages at the lowest rates can be a barrier for many aspiring homeowners. Homebuyers with lower credit scores who do obtain mortgages often end up with high rates of interest and correspondingly high monthly mortgage payments. We will explore ways to partner with non-profit organizations to provide homebuyer education and credit counseling services to help potential homebuyers improve their credit scores
- **Explore creative approaches to encourage homeownership.** Alternative models of homeownership, such as co- ownership, may be more accessible to some households than traditional homeownership.
- **Explore shared-equity homeownership programs.** Median home prices in Rhode Island are among the highest in the country. Shared-equity homeownership programs use a one-time public investment to reduce the purchase price of a home to a level affordable to lower-income families. The home's sale price is restricted to ensure that it remains affordable to future income-eligible buyers while at the same time building some wealth for families who would otherwise be unable to buy a home.
- **Monitoring and analyzing third-party sources of data for rent and home sale costs** (for example CoStar and Zillow). These resources provide additional information on available units and cost.

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Summary of Stakeholder Input:

Current system opportunities/gaps

- Accessing homeownership: With housing prices at an historic high there continues to be a need for more downpayment assistance for first time homebuyers, particularly for disadvantaged households like first generation buyers.
- Rhode Island has an opportunity to adopt a more forward-looking, predictive approach to housing policy and strategy development. For example, if condos are the thing that is coming, RI should figure out what the things are that are going to be bigger problems, what policy/strategy/supports are needed. There is an absence of clear guidance that protects condo owners and there is limited oversight of condo associations. For affordable units, there has not been a way to protect the affordable unit from rising condo fees. There is a disparate impact for affordable condo owners.

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Policy Area 3: Housing Affordability and Access

Policy Area Overview: Housing affordability and access relates to activities that focus on ensuring housing is affordable for households and that households have the supports they need to access and maintain stable housing. This may include activities related to housing vouchers; housing navigation support; state or federal programs to maintain housing (e.g., LIHEAP); landlord-tenant relationships; eviction prevention; monitoring deed restrictions; financing related to affordability requirements; tracking data on housing affordability; etc.

Review of Organizational Survey Responses:

39% of respondents (14/36) noted they had a role in housing affordability and access

Strategy/Planning:

- **Department of Housing:** The Department of Housing is the state's lead agency for housing, homelessness, and community development in the state of Rhode Island.
 - The Department has statutory authority for developing a statewide housing plan. The Department has contracted with a team that includes Abt Global, the RI League of Cities and Towns, Root Policy, and Housing Works RI to develop a housing plan for the State of Rhode Island.
 - The Department collaborates with and assists municipalities. It has conducted significant municipal engagement around housing development, including meeting individually with all 39 cities and towns as part of the development of the state housing plan. The Department has hired a Chief of Municipal Planning & Programming who serves as a liaison with municipalities regarding their housing issues and devises and operates municipal assistance programs to address them.
 - The Department's team has collaborated with RI Housing on the development of the qualified allocation plan (QAP) and is partnering on the upcoming 5-year consolidated plan for HUD. The Department works alongside RI Housing to support their MTAP program and Proactive Development function.
 - The Department is responsible for producing and making recommendations in the annual integrated housing report.
 - The Department also develops budget and legislative proposals and works with DOA, OMB, and Governor's Office staff to advance such proposals. Annually, similar to all executive branch public agencies, the Department proposes constrained and unconstrained budget initiatives and is incorporated into the Governor's budget.
 - Department staff monitors and collaborates with the General Assembly, including through its many commissions (e.g. Land Use Commission, Landlord Tenant Commission, Housing Affordability Commission, Short-term Rental Commission, Planners Education Commission, etc.).
 - The Department is also developing tools to further the implementation of the state housing plan. These include conducting a study of the impact of housing development on municipal school costs, developing a toolkit and trainings for municipal officials, developing a visualization tool to help build support for housing development.

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- The Department funds and provides staff support for the HRC. This includes monitoring and reporting on the HRC's budget, staffing any strategy, planning and policy efforts, as well as organizing and conducting the Commission's monthly meetings, as well as additional budget and planning meetings.
- The Department is also represented on the statewide planning council and is a member of the interagency Olmstead coordination team.
- The Secretary of Housing is a Cabinet position and is engaged in the Governor's Cabinet to support interagency coordination and collaboration on strategy and policy.
- The Department receives the Vacant Schools list from RIDE and investigates these and other properties for adaptive reuse and development opportunities.
- The Department constantly seeks to improve data and permitting systems and supports the development of statewide e-permitting, GIS, and other information systems.
- The Department was charged by the legislature with developing a housing organizational plan that includes a review, analysis, and assessment of functions related to housing of all state departments, quasi-publics, boards, and commissions.
- **HRC:**
 - Serves as the executive department agency responsible for developing housing policies, plans, and standards per RIGL 42-128. Has statutory authority (RIGL 42-128-8.1) to develop and implement the state's strategic housing plan and coordinate housing activities across state agencies and political subdivisions.
 - Additionally, the HRC has highlighted housing affordability and access through its monthly presentation series.
- **HRC Coordinating Committee:** The Coordinating Committee's roles in establishing an interagency MOU, establishing guidelines for the housing production fund, and establishing the housing incentives for municipalities program could influence housing affordability and access. The housing production fund statute requires RI Housing to prioritize households exiting homelessness or earning not more than 30% of AMI.
- **RI Housing:** Develops Consolidated Plan and Fair Housing Plan
- **PUC:** Reviews and implements policy decisions on utility cost allocation, rates, and program design that affect housing affordability.
- **Office of Healthy Aging:** Supports statewide strategy related to housing affordability and access by raising concerns of older adults at the Housing Resources Commission.
- **RI Developmental Disabilities Council:**
 - Developing a website for centralized information for people with developmental disabilities, in order to allow greater understanding and access.
 - Educate legislators and policy makers
- **Office of Child Advocate:** Advocacy and policy work related to access to vouchers and affordable housing for youth transitioning from DCYF care.
- **RICoC:** Policymaking lead on local issues related to ending homelessness in Rhode Island. The CoC Board and CoC Committees set strategy, policy, and planning priorities for the Rhode Island homeless response system. This work necessarily includes incorporating strategy, policy, and planning priorities on both housing affordability and access and on specialized housing for specific subpopulations.

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- **EOHHS:** Planning policies and programs that aim to improve access to affordable housing for vulnerable populations. EOHHS collaborates with state agencies, housing agencies, and community organizations to integrate health and housing services, ensuring that individuals have the support they need to maintain stable housing. EOHHS coordinates with federal programs, such as Medicaid, to support long-term housing solutions for populations requiring both healthcare and housing support, reducing the need for institutional care. Home Stabilization is also being pursued in the 1115 waiver.

Programs/Financing:

- **Department of Housing:**
 - The Department of Housing supports and funds eviction defense programs run by Rhode Island Legal Services and Center for Justice through federal Emergency Rental Assistance funds.
 - The Department is responsible for producing and updating the state's Landlord Tenant Handbook every two years. This is a consumer guide explaining the rights and responsibilities of landlords and tenants under Rhode Island law. While there is no requirement for printed copies, historically, OHCD has produced them and kept a number of extras available in the office for members of the public.
 - Department staff regularly receive and respond to constituent questions and concerns related to accessing affordable housing. These activities range from providing information to referring them to other state agencies (e.g. RIDOH for lead issues) or to RILS/Center for Justice depending on the nature of the issue.
 - Additionally, the Consolidated Homelessness Fund – discussed in more depth in the homelessness section – has funded landlord incentives, coordinated entry, housing navigation, and rapid rehousing rental subsidies.
- **HRC:** Financially supports RI Housing's Centralized Wait list system which enables applicants to apply for multiple affordable housing opportunities through a single portal, improving efficiency. Additionally, the HRC's contributions to the Consolidated Homelessness Fund have supported initiatives such as landlord incentives, coordinated entry, housing navigation, and rapid rehousing rental subsidies.
- **RI Housing:** Administer rental assistance programs.
- **RIDOH:**
 - Rape Prevention and Education: Educate and advocate for shelters to be inclusive or affirming for individuals who are LGBTQ+; support the RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence actions to identify affordable properties for transitional housing and shelters.
 - Reducing Maternal Violence and Mortality: Implement the MOSAIC program, a mother mentorship program, to build resiliency. One aspect of the work is to address housing instability and insecurity.
 - Perinatal and Early Childhood Health (PECH) program: Links families to services related to housing affordability and access.
 - Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Program: Addressing housing affordability and access as a major structural determinant of health for RI families and people with disabilities.

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- **PUC:** Oversees utility rates and programs related to payment assistance, income-based rate discounts, termination of services notices and moratoria, among other utility rate and program responsibilities that relate to utility affordability and access.
- **Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner:** Rhode Island Reconnect
- **RI DHS:**
 - Housing services are designed to help eligible individuals and families obtain or retain adequate housing in the community. The service is provided through the Economic Support Services unit and individuals retain housing, offering support for housing searches, landlord-tenant counseling, and tenant rights education. They provide moving assistance for eligible recipients of RI Works (RIW) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) who are forced to relocate due to unsafe or uninhabitable housing conditions.
 - Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP): Helps low-income households reduce energy costs, making housing more affordable by improving energy efficiency and providing critical upgrades such as insulation and weather stripping.
- **RICoC:** The CoC oversees a portfolio of over \$15 million dollars annually in funding for Rhode Island's homeless response system. Additionally, federal regulations require coordination and collaboration between Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) recipients and the Continuum of Care on operating within the jurisdiction in determining how to allocate ESG funds, and to set policy related to the homeless response system. The CoC's Funding Committee functions as the review committee for CoC-funded projects, and for the Consolidated Homeless Fund. Additionally, entitlement recipients of other HUD funds (such as CDBG) must consult with their CoC on local need and priorities when developing their 5-Year Plans for investing HUD funds to ensure alignment and consistency.
- **EOHHS:**
 - **Crossroads OUD/SUD Statewide Housing Navigation and Housing Problem Solving:** EOHHS and Department of Housing partnered to utilize opioid settlement funds which creates opportunity to prevent homelessness and/or rapidly exit households from homelessness through Housing Problem Solving services, landlord incentives, and mitigation strategies, and specific housing operating supports provided by Crossroads of Rhode Island to this specific priority population.
 - **Community Integration Support:** Supports Health Equity Zones (HEZ) to enhance staff capacity to support community integration of Medicaid Beneficiaries within a placed based geographic zone who may face barriers to finding and maintaining secure housing above and beyond what traditional HCBS can support.
 - **Home Stabilization Services and Supports:** Provides an array of time-limited services, including home tenancy support, life skill training, and other modeling and teaching services for individuals who require support in maintaining a home, and home find services to individuals who require support in securing, and transitioning to housing.

Regulation/Enforcement:

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- **Department of Housing:** Through its shared staffing of the HRC, the Department is involved with the regulation and enforcement of the Monitoring Agents program, which ensures that low- and moderate-income rental and homeownership units in our state follow all requirements and deed restrictions are followed
- **RI Housing:** Ensures compliance with state and federal rental assistance program requirements; oversees Section 8 Project Based developments on behalf of HUD; and ensures developments we finance comply with federal accessibility requirements.
- **PUC:** Acts as the formal regulator of most programs and all rates. Some activities of the utilities, such as termination, are not jurisdictional to the PUC.
- **RICoC:** The CoC is responsible for monitoring CoC recipient agencies annually and works with the Funding Committee to hold these agencies accountable to system performance standards. These are two separate processes as monitoring focuses on implementation of the program in compliance with HUD and RICoC rules and regulations, while the performance scoring process rates projects annually on how well they are performing. The CoC Planners work with the CoC Board and Funding Committee to conduct monitoring, provide system training, and support recipients in the implementation of their programs.
- **EOHHS:** Monitors contracts to ensure that funds are being utilized within the terms and allowable uses of the funding sources.

Data:

- **Department of Housing:**
 - The Department is beginning the process of collecting housing data in one place, given that housing data is collected in a dispersed way across state, municipal, and federal government agencies, non-profits, quasi-publics, and private industry. The Department views the collection and presentation of housing data as an essential role and is currently requesting hiring authority to fill an additional data analytics role. Some of the data that the Department frequently analyzes comes from HUD (housing choice vouchers, HIC, and PIT). While other data comes from municipal governments, such as housing units permitted. Other important datasets include the Department of Business Regulation's short-term rental database, the low-mod database, the Zoning Atlas (created by HousingWorks RI), the American Community Survey, and the Census. The Department monitors metrics from these data sources to inform policymaking and identify areas of need. Additionally, the Department is currently requesting resources to build out its data infrastructure, improve data collection and data quality. The Department also launched a dashboard showing progress on the usage of the \$332M in State Fiscal Recovery Funds awarded for housing production, preservation, planning, and homelessness. The dashboard is publicly available and updated monthly on the Department's website.
 - The Department of Housing is engaged in planning efforts that have significant data needs. The Department is currently developing the state housing plan, with the aim of becoming the new housing guide plan element of the state guide plan. That plan will include new housing goals for the state along with associated metrics that will require routine data collection to measure progress on state goals. The Department also collaborates with RIHousing on the development of the

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Consolidated Plan for HUD. This is a five-year plan that “help states and local jurisdictions assess their affordable housing and community development needs and market conditions, and make data-driven, placed based investment decisions.”

- As a state agency, the Department also has a role in establishing performance metrics for the State’s budget/performance management process under the Department of Administration. To date performance metrics have focused on progress implementing SFRF funded initiatives. Additional performance metrics are being developed through the development of the state housing plan.
- Additionally, the Department of Housing is required to produce several reports for the Governor, legislature, and public. The reports all require the collection and presentation of housing related data. These reports are included below:
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 - § 45-53-12(b): Fee in Lieu and Public Housing Report – Annual report on the fees in lieu of the development of affordable housing collected by municipalities and the utilization of vouchers by Public Housing Authorities.
 - § 45-24-76: Accessory Dwelling Unit Annual Report – Annual report on the number of ADUs permitted and provided Certificates of Occupancy in the past two years by municipality along with any ADU related ordinances enacted by each municipality.
 - § 45-53-11: Low and Moderate Income Housing Annual Comprehensive Permit Report – Annual report on the status of comprehensive permit applications, including the number of units built and provided Certificates of Occupancy, by municipality.
 - § 44-71-10: State Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Report – Annual report on the amount of state funded low-income housing tax credit agreements entered into in the previous year.
 - § 45-53-10: Vacant Schools Annual Report – Annual report on the number of vacant schools in Rhode Island and the status of redevelopment efforts to convert vacant schools into affordable housing.
 - Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER) - Annual report required by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development providing accomplishments and progress on Consolidated Plan goals.
- **RI Housing:** Tracks information on rental assistance clients and PBCA developments.
- **PUC:** Requires utilities to provide data on customer costs, program enrollment, arrearages, arrearage management and success, and many other utility performance and cost data. The most robust data sets are related to customers served by Rhode Island Energy Gas and Electric.
- **DHS:** Integrated eligibility system captures data on living situations and documents activities with families in case notes.
- **RI Developmental Disabilities Council:** Reviews the state's access to housing on a five-year basis
- **RICoC:**
 - Designates the HMIS Lead in the state, which works with all ESG and CoC-funded projects. This includes submitting all mandated reports to HUD on time

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and accurately, including the Point in Time (PIT) Count, the Housing Inventory Count (HIC), the Longitudinal System Analysis (LSA), and the System Performance Measures (SPM) report, among other responsibilities.

- **EOHHS:**
 - Tracks data for populations served through Medicaid, and other state programs within the Ecosystem. Additional data may include HMIS and vendor reporting.
 - Monitors contract deliverables, outcomes, and tracking the utilization of state resources allocated for housing initiatives.

Review of Current State Statute:

Strategy/Planning:

- Department of Housing:
(§ 42-64.34-2. Powers and duties.)
 - The department of housing shall be the state's lead agency for housing, homelessness, and community development in the state of Rhode Island: To serve as the governor's chief advisor and liaison to federal policymakers on housing, homelessness, and community development as well as the principal point of contact on any such related matters; to coordinate the housing, homelessness, and community development programs of the state of Rhode Island and its departments, agencies, commissions, corporations, and subdivisions;
- Housing Resources Commission:
(§ 42-128-5. Purposes.)
 - To provide opportunities for safe, sanitary, decent, adequate and affordable housing in Rhode Island.
 - To encourage public-private partnerships that foster the production, rehabilitation, development, maintenance, and improvement of housing and housing conditions, especially for low and moderate income people.
 - To foster and support no-profit organizations, including community development corporations, and their associations and intermediaries, that are engaged in providing and housing related services.
 - To facilitate private for-profit production and rehabilitation of housing for diverse populations and income groups.
- (§ 42-128-8.1. Housing production and rehabilitation.)
 - Strategic plan. The commission, in conjunction with the statewide planning program, shall develop by July 1, 2006, a five-year (5) strategic plan for housing, which plan shall be adopted as an element of the state guide plan, and which shall include quantified goals, measurable intermediate steps toward the accomplishment of the goals, implementation activities, and standards for the production and/or rehabilitation of year-round housing to meet the housing needs including, but not limited to, the following: Workers, housing affordable at their income level; Low-income and very-low income households, rental housing;

Programs/Financing:

- Department of Housing
(§ 42-128-2. Rhode Island housing resources agency created.)

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- There is hereby established a restricted receipt account within the general fund of the state. Funds from this account shall be used to provide for housing and homelessness initiatives including housing production, lead hazard abatement, housing rental subsidy, housing retention assistance, and homelessness services and prevention assistance with priority to veterans. Effective December 31, 2024 or after fulfillment of the reporting requirements established under §42-64.34-1(vi), whichever is later, the restricted account established under §42-128-2(3) shall be administered by the Department of Housing in consultation with the Housing Resources Commission. Funds in this account will be used in accordance with the uses established in § 42-128-2(3).
- Housing Resources Commission:
(§ 42-128-2. Rhode Island housing resources agency created.)
 - There is hereby established a restricted receipt account within the general fund of the state. Funds from this account shall be used to provide for housing and homelessness initiatives including housing production, lead hazard abatement, housing rental subsidy, housing retention assistance, and homelessness services and prevention assistance with priority to veterans. Effective December 31, 2024 or after fulfillment of the reporting requirements established under §42-64.34-1(vi), whichever is later, the restricted account established under §42-128-2(3) shall be administered by the Department of Housing in consultation with the Housing Resources Commission. Funds in this account will be used in accordance with the uses established in § 42-128-2(3).
- Housing Resources Coordinating Committee:
(§ 42-128-2.1. Housing Production Fund.)
 - There is hereby established a restricted receipt account within the general fund of the state, to be known as the housing production fund. Funds from this account shall be administered by the Rhode Island housing and mortgage finance corporation, subject to program and reporting guidelines adopted by the coordinating committee of the Rhode Island housing resources commission for housing production initiatives, including: Financial assistance by loan, grant, or otherwise, for the planning, production, or preservation of affordable housing in Rhode Island for households earning not more than eighty percent (80%) of area median income.
 - In administering the housing production fund, the Rhode Island housing and mortgage finance corporation shall give priority to households either exiting homelessness or earning not more than thirty percent (30%) of area median income.
- (§ 42-128-8. Powers and duties.)
 - Administer the programs pertaining to housing resources that may be assigned by state law. The commission shall have the power and duty to administer programs for housing, housing services, and community development, including, but not limited to, programs pertaining to: Rental assistance, Community development, Outreach, education and technical assistance services, Assistance, including financial support, to nonprofit organizations and community development corporations, Tax credits that assist in the provision of housing or foster

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community development or that result in support to nonprofit organizations performing functions to accomplish the purposes of this chapter.

- RIHousing:
 - (§ 42-55-5. General powers.)
 - Stimulate environmental planning for housing for persons of low and moderate income in order to enhance opportunities of those persons for self-development and employment;
 - Subject to any agreement with bondholders or note holders, to purchase and make commitments for the purchase of, to invest in, and dispose of securities or other obligations issued by mortgage lenders to finance residential housing for persons and families of low and moderate income, including, but not limited to, securities or other obligations payable from, backed by or otherwise evidencing an interest in mortgages securing mortgage loans to finance residential housing for persons and families of low and moderate income;
 - To administer and manage Section 8 tenant based certificate programs and Section 8 rental voucher programs in those municipalities that do not have a local housing authority and in those municipalities whose local housing authority elects to contract with Rhode Island housing mortgage and finance corporation.
 - (§ 42-55-5.3. Letters of eligibility.)
 - The corporation shall issue all letters of eligibility for low- and moderate-income housing for applications made pursuant to chapter 53 of title 45.
 - (§ 42-55-6. Powers relative to making loans.)
 - Make, undertake commitments to make, and participate in the making of mortgage loans to persons of low or moderate income who may purchase residential housing or who own and occupy residential housing used as security for loans where the proceeds may be dispersed at such time or times that the corporation may determine, including without limitation persons and families of low and moderate income who are eligible or potentially eligible for federally insured mortgage loans or federal mortgage loans. These loans shall be made only after a determination by the corporation that mortgage loans are not otherwise available, wholly or in part, from private lenders upon reasonably equivalent terms and conditions.
 - (§ 42-55-7. Powers relative to purchase of and sale to mortgage lenders of loans — Loans to mortgage lender.)
 - To invest in, purchase or to make commitments to purchase, and take assignments from mortgage lenders, of notes and mortgages evidencing loans for the construction, rehabilitation, installation of energy saving improvements to, purchase, leasing, or refinancing of housing for persons and families of low and moderate income or health care facilities in this state upon the terms set forth in § 42-55-10;
 - (§ 42-55-24.1. Allocation of tax credits.)
 - The corporation shall be the sole and exclusive agent for the allocation of all federal tax credits for low-income housing under 26 U.S.C. § 42. The corporation shall have all of the powers necessary to effectuate those allocations, including without limitation, the power to adopt rules, regulations, and policies regarding those allocations.

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Regulation/Enforcement:

- Department of Housing:
(§ 42-64.34-2. Powers and duties.)
 - Creation of a written guide for consumers relating to the rights and duties of landlords and tenants pursuant to chapter 18 of title 34, which the secretary shall update at minimum on an biennial basis. The guide shall be posted on the website of the department of housing and shall be published in both English and Spanish.
- Housing Resources Commission:
(§ 42-128-8. Powers and duties.)
 - Establish, implement, and monitor state performance measures and guidelines for housing programs. The commission shall have the power and the duty: To promulgate performance measures and guidelines for housing programs conducted under state law.
- RIHousing:
(§ 42-55-5. General powers.)
 - Make and publish rules and regulations respecting its lending programs and any other rules and regulations that are necessary to effectuate its corporate purposes;
(§ 42-55-8. Supervision of housing sponsors and health care sponsors.)
 - The corporation shall have the power to supervise housing sponsors of multi-family residential housing units and single family residential housing units designed by the sponsor for occupancy primarily by persons and families of low and moderate income or sponsors of health care facilities and their real and personal property in the following respects:

Data:

- Department of Housing:
Annual integrated housing report: Annual report on a broad range of housing metrics, includes a requirement to project the units needed for the state, and receive data from municipalities.
(§ 42-64.19-3(a)(4)(iv))
 - Fee in Lieu and Public Housing Report: Annual report on the fees in lieu of the development of affordable housing collected by municipalities and the utilization of vouchers by Public Housing Authorities.
- (§ 45-53-12(b))
 - Accessory Dwelling Unit Annual Report: Annual report on the number of ADUs permitted and provided Certificates of Occupancy in the past two years by municipality along with any ADU related ordinances enacted by each municipality.
- (§ 45-24-76)
 - Low and Moderate Income Housing Annual Comprehensive Permit Report: Annual report on the status of comprehensive permit applications, including the number of units built and provided Certificates of Occupancy, by municipality.
- (§ 45-53-11)

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- State Low-Income Housing Tax Credit Report: Annual report on the amount of state funded low-income housing tax credit agreements entered into in the previous year.
(§ 44-71-10)
- Vacant Schools Annual Report: Annual report on the number of vacant schools in Rhode Island and the status of redevelopment efforts to convert vacant schools into affordable housing.
(§ 45-53-10)
- Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report (CAPER): Annual report required by the federal Department of Housing and Urban Development providing accomplishments and progress on Consolidated Plan goals.
- Housing Resources Commission:
(§ 42-128-5. Purposes.)
 - To develop and promulgate state policies, and plans, for housing and housing production and performance measures for housing programs established pursuant to state law.
(§ 42-128-8. Powers and duties.)
 - To monitor and evaluate housing responsibilities established by state law, and to establish a process for annual reporting on the outcomes of the programs and investments of the state in housing for low- and moderate-income people.
(§ 42-128-16. Annual report.)
 - The commission shall submit for each calendar year by March 1 of the next year a report to the governor and the general assembly on its activities and its findings and recommendations regarding housing issues, which report by census tract, shall include the number and dollar amount of its programs and an assessment of health related housing issues, including the incidence of lead poisoning.
- RIHousing
(§ 42-55-22.2. Fair housing policy reports.)
 - The corporation shall administer all of its programs and activities relating to housing or community development in a manner affirmatively to further the policies of chapter 37 of title 34 (Rhode Island Fair Housing Practices Act). The corporation shall annually report to the general assembly on the measures it has taken affirmatively to further the policies of chapter 37 of title 34. The corporation shall compile a biennial affirmative action report which will indicate the extent of minority participation in the following corporation programs: homeownership programs, home equity conversion mortgage, home repair program, rental housing development, emergency housing assistance.

Review of Prior Report Findings:

Current system opportunities/gaps:

Boston Consulting Group and The Rhode Island Foundation 2023 Report:

- Based on state benchmarking the following are potential functions of a state housing department related to housing affordability and access:
 - Set affordable housing production targets in tandem with housing development planning

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- Set strategy for public housing
- Mandate tenant protections if affordability restrictions terminate
- Enforce affordability quota
- Enforce acceptance of vouchers at rental properties
- Apply for and manage federal programs, including:
 - Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)
 - Supportive Housing for Elderly
 - Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities
- Public housing
- Rental assistance programs
- Mortgage/homeowner assistance
- Utilities assistance
- Section 8 voucher
- Veteran financial assistance
- Real-estate taxes programs
- Track housing affordability

The 2023 RI Integrated Housing Survey:

- Explore ways to build on pre-existing and SFRF-funded residential rehabilitation programs designed to assist low- and moderate- income Rhode Islanders in meeting their housing rehabilitation needs, allowing them access to decent, safe and healthy housing.
- There are also opportunities in Rhode Island to analyze the costs of a state rental voucher program with a range of options for housing assistance, perhaps including shallow subsidies for severely cost-burdened households.

Summary of Stakeholder Input:

Current system strengths:

- RIHousing is able to quickly/efficiently allocate and administer funding.
- RIHousing has expertise in managing and completing the reports associated with federal monies and resources.

Current system opportunities/gaps:

Structure and Governance

- The current structure of RIHousing's role as a Public Housing Authority (PHA) creates challenges in voucher administration. While RIHousing manages vouchers for 17/39 cities and towns, there are jurisdictional limitations and complex porting requirements between housing authorities that create barriers to voucher utilization.
- The HRC's current structure, specifically its 1) 28-member committee, 2) role in both allocation and receipt of funds, and 3) reliance on less transparent subcommittees for bonds has the potential to create operational inefficiencies and governance challenges that impact effective decision-making.
- The current system, where RIHousing manages the majority of funding streams, limits strategic flexibility in deploying state resources for diverse housing needs. This structure constrains policy innovation, such as separating state from federal LIHTC requirements or developing programs for middle-income and market-rate units, while also raising transparency concerns around funding decisions and scoring criteria.

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- Collectively, state and community leaders need clarity related to the roles played by, or to be played by, the Department of Housing, RI Housing, the Housing Resources Commission, and the tables convened by and among them, so we maximize knowledge and resources.

System Coordination

- Improve coordination between state agencies, municipalities and community/industry partners on housing policy and programs: There currently is no entity tasked with ensuring coordination and collaboration between different agencies administering housing and homeless related programs and services. Improving coordination will help to ensure that different programs complement one another and will help to identify gaps in meeting housing needs. There is also no entity coordinating the process of bringing together stakeholders (including state agencies) to address critical policy and legislative issues involving housing and homelessness. Various entities conduct research on housing related issues, but there is no one organization coordinating that work or comparing and learning from the best practices or data analysis being conducted by these different entities to inform the policy and program development conversation.
- Streamline processes and requirements: Developing and providing tenants access to affordable housing are challenging processes made more so by the many different programs and requirements at the federal, state and local level that govern them. It would be helpful to identify opportunities to reduce regulatory burdens and better align funding cycles and program requirements to streamline both the process for developing housing and the process for connecting tenants to housing opportunities they can afford.
- Consolidating research and reporting functions: There are many planning and reporting responsibilities related to housing and homelessness that are spread across a number of different agencies and Departments. Where possible, it would be more efficient to consolidate these functions to avoid duplicative information requests and reports. Similarly, it would be helpful to centralize housing and homelessness policy planning and prioritization, informed by a wide range of providers and partners, to ensure consistent and coordinated goals and strategies. Centralized oversight of implementation of these plans will also help to ensure that progress is made in achieving goals across state departments, agencies and industry and community partners.
- Cross-train staff across housing, homelessness, and other related programs would improve service delivery by enhancing staff knowledge and reducing wait times for clients seeking information on multiple services.
- Implement Performance Metrics and Continuous Improvement Programs
 - Opportunity: Establishing clear performance metrics and adopting a continuous improvement approach to measure the effectiveness of housing and homelessness services, identify bottlenecks, and make data-informed decisions to optimize processes.
 - Action Steps: Develop and track key performance indicators (KPIs) for housing and homelessness services, such as client satisfaction, service utilization rates, and time to placement. Regularly review data to identify areas for improvement, and implement feedback loops to ensure services evolve to meet client needs.

Resources and Service Challenges:

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- Leveraging Technology for Process Automation and Self-Service
 - Implementing digital tools for clients to apply for services, schedule appointments, and access case information would improve service delivery speed and reduce administrative burdens. Automation can streamline processes such as eligibility determination, application processing, and benefit renewals
- Enhanced Data Sharing and Integration:
 - Opportunity: By improving data sharing we can reduce duplicative work and gain a comprehensive view of client needs. An integrated data system across agencies would allow us to track clients more effectively, minimize repeated data entry, and facilitate coordinated care.
 - Action Steps: Develop a centralized data platform or data-sharing agreements with key partners, such as Rhode Island Housing, community action programs, and homelessness service providers. This system should enable shared access to eligibility information, service history, and case notes.
- Coordinated Entry and Case Management
 - Gap: Clients often encounter multiple entry points into the system and are required to provide the same information to various agencies, leading to fragmented services and inefficiencies.
 - Function Needed: A coordinated entry system that centralizes intake and assessment across all housing and homelessness services would streamline service delivery. In addition, an integrated case management system that enables real-time communication and coordination is essential to ensuring clients receive seamless support
- Workforce Development and Support for Service Providers
 - Gap: Many service providers face high caseloads and limited resources, which can lead to burnout and staff turnover. Additionally, there is a shortage of trained staff to deliver specialized services, such as case management and behavioral health support, which are essential for stabilizing individuals in housing.
 - Function Needed: Expanded workforce development programs to train and retain staff are critical. Offering incentives, professional development, and specialized training for staff working in housing and homelessness services would increase capacity and improve service quality.
- Housing Stability and Financial Coaching
 - Gap: There is a lack of ongoing financial coaching and stability services that help individuals and families remain stably housed over the long term.
 - Function Needed: Programs offering financial literacy, budgeting assistance, and tenant education would enhance housing stability. These services could include ongoing coaching to help families build savings, improve credit, and reduce dependency on emergency assistance.
- Emergency and Catastrophic Assistance for Non-Eligible Populations
 - Gap: Some individuals who experience sudden crises, such as job loss, domestic violence, or natural disasters, may not qualify for traditional housing assistance programs but still need immediate support to prevent homelessness.
 - Function Needed: A flexible emergency assistance fund that can be used to support individuals ineligible for existing programs but facing urgent housing

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needs would address this gap. This fund should have streamlined eligibility requirements and be accessible to those in immediate need.

Population-Specific Needs

- Ensuring that there is access to safe and affordable housing presents the opportunity for long-term success. Without the constant fear of losing housing, young adults can work towards career development or higher education. Ensuring that there is a streamlined process and that providers in this work are well-supported to continue and expand this work is imperative. We have data on the population of youth we need to serve each year, having enough housing to meet that need is critical. We also encourage the exploration of creative housing opportunities to develop these resources for our youth.
- Addressing accessibility challenges: As Rhode Island’s population continues to age, more households will require accessibility related modifications to their homes to allow them to age in place, and overall, housing will need to be more accessible for people with disabilities.

Funding

- Lack of operating support: There is not enough operating support to allow the lowest income tenants to be served in affordable developments. The federal programs that once coupled capital funding with operating support to be able to serve the lowest income households have largely disappeared. Resources are needed at the state level to fill that gap.
- More discussion and strategy across state agencies to address affordability, access, safety/protections; landlord education on public health issues and resources to support them and their tenants. Shelter capacity is inadequate, housing wait lists are too long, lack of affordability across RI, cliff effect of support programs
- Streamlining Funding and Resource Allocation
 - Opportunity: Efficient allocation of available resources can be achieved by centralizing budget planning and ensuring that funds are directed where they have the highest impact. This approach can also reduce redundancy in program funding and allow for better alignment of resources with needs.
 - Action Steps: Conduct a thorough analysis of current housing and homelessness funding streams and assess gaps or overlaps. Develop a centralized budgeting approach that ensures funds are allocated to high-priority areas and creates a more unified framework.

Affordable Housing Availability

- Gap: There is a significant shortage of affordable housing units across Rhode Island, which limits options for low-income families and individuals. This shortage is particularly acute in high-cost areas, making it difficult to place clients in stable, affordable housing even with financial assistance.
- Function Needed: Increased investment in affordable housing development is needed, as well as stronger partnerships with housing authorities and developers to expand access. Functions like a state-led affordable housing task force or a dedicated affordable housing development fund could help address this gap.

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POLICY AREA 4: SPECIALIZED HOUSING
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Policy Area 4: Specialized Housing

Policy Area Overview: Specialized housing relates to housing that is for specific populations or purposes, such as Assisted Living facilities, Transitional Housing, Recovery Housing, etc.

Review of Organizational Survey Responses:

39% of respondents (14/36) noted they had a role in specialized housing

Strategy/Planning:

- **Department of Housing:** Closely related to our homelessness work, the Department supports specialized housing particularly for those who have been victims of domestic violence. Governor McKee convened an Executive Working Group on Domestic Violence to identify gaps in the current domestic violence response and prevention systems. As part of that work, the Department presented and had approved a recommendation to convene a planning cohort to develop a report on housing needs for domestic violence survivors. The recommendation was adopted by the Executive Working Group and the planning cohort is expected to produce a report by December 2025.
- **HRC:** Housing for specific populations was identified by HRC commissioners as one of their top 3 priorities for 2024. The HRC has convened twice to discuss potential policy solutions and research needed to advance this work. Additionally, the HRC has highlighted housing needs for specific populations through its monthly presentation series.
- **RI Developmental Disabilities Council:** Educates legislators and policy makers on the needs of people with developmental disabilities
- **Office of the Child Advocate:** Advocacy and policy work related to access to vouchers and affordable housing for youth transitioning from DCYF care. We continue to advocate for access to specialized housing with appropriate supports to ensure youth's success following their transition from DCYF care.
- **RICoC:** Policymaking lead on local issues related to ending homelessness in Rhode Island. The CoC Board and CoC Committees set strategy, policy, and planning priorities for the Rhode Island homeless response system, which can include incorporating strategy, policy, and planning priorities on both housing affordability and access and on specialized housing for specific subpopulations.
- **EOHHS:** Supports specialized housing for vulnerable populations. EOHHS works to ensure that these populations have access to housing environments connected to supportive services that are tailored to their unique health and social needs.
- **Governor's Commission on Aging:** Advocates for safe and affordable housing for older RIs.
- **RIHousing:** Develops Consolidated Plan and Fair Housing Plan.
- **BHDDH:** BHDDH serves approximately 55,000 individuals with mental health and substance use disorders and individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Most of the population we serve are very low income, receiving SSI/SSDI and need or will need affordable and supportive housing. BHDDH has a primary staff person working

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on increasing access to housing through partnerships with RI Housing and public housing authorities to increase Mainstream and 811 vouchers.

- **Department of Public Safety, Public Safety Grant Administration Office:** Coordinates planning, policy, and programs across the criminal justice system.
- **Governor's Overdose Task Force:** Develops strategic plans and sets target indicators
- **Opioid Settlement Committee:** Alignment and monitoring of spending, planning and evaluation of Abatement funds allocated for Homelessness Prevention (EOHHS) and Recovery Housing (BHDDH)

Programs/Financing:

- **Department of Housing:**
 - **Domestic Violence:** As part of the Consolidated Homelessness Fund (CHF), the Department supports organizations assisting those who have been victims of domestic violence, such as the Elizabeth Buffum Chace Center, the Domestic Violence Resource Center of South County, and the Blackstone Valley Advocacy Center. Moreover, Rapid Rehousing and Housing Navigation efforts assist domestic violence victims through a number of different providers.
 - **Recovery Housing:** The Department also runs the Recovery Housing program in collaboration with BHDDH. The Department has limited federal funding (approximately \$3M) to grant to partners or communities for doing development (i.e. predevelopment, acquisition, renovation, etc) of buildings to be used for recovery housing, and BHDDH will fund the operations of the building.
 - The Department also administers funding through the federal Housing Opportunities for Persons With AIDS (HOPWA) program.
- **HRC:** HRC has included a preference for specialized housing funded through the Building Homes Rhode Island program.
- **DHS:** Provides targeted support for certain populations, including individuals who need to move due to specific situations such as domestic violence, fire, natural disaster, or homelessness. These services include funding for temporary shelter and emergency assistance for individuals in crisis.
- **RIDOH:**
 - **Tobacco Control Program:** Manages approximately 70 calls inquiries annually to provide technical assistance requests related to secondhand smoke or product related inquiries related to RI Gen Laws "Public Health and Workplace Safety Act." The work allows for educating tenants, landlords/property managers, and building associations with rights to smoke free policies in multi-unit residential settings.
 - **Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury:** Rhode Island does not currently have step-down options available when clients living with traumatic brain injuries (TBI) are discharged from inpatient rehabilitation hospitals and unable to go home. Some examples of concerns elevated include inability to maintain rent payments due to the logistical and financial strain of recovery. Survivors are losing homes due to brain injuries, are not able to work to continue to pay bills, and resource delivery is a challenge.
 - **Rape Prevention and Education:** Educate and advocate for shelters to be inclusive or affirming for individuals who are LGBTQ+; support the RI Coalition Against

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- Domestic Violence actions to identify affordable properties for transitional housing and shelters.
- Reducing Maternal Violence and Mortality: Implement the MOSAIC program, a mother mentorship program, to build resiliency. One aspect of the work is to address housing instability and insecurity.
 - Perinatal and Early Childhood Health (PECH) program: Links families to services related to housing affordability and access.
 - Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Program: Addressing housing affordability and access as a major structural determinant of health for RI families and people with disabilities.
- **DHS:** Supports moving payment assistance for individuals who receive SSI Income, reimbursement allowances for moves for those who receive Rhode Island Works (RIW) cash assistance. catastrophic assistance
 - **RI Developmental Disabilities Council:** Directs grants to people who can demonstrate unique housing ideas for people with developmental disabilities.
 - **RICoC:** The CoC oversees a portfolio of over \$15 million dollars annually in funding for Rhode Island’s homeless response system. This includes funding for the following project types – Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid ReHousing, Coordinated Entry, the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS), Supportive Services Only (SSO), and CoC Planning. Additionally, federal regulations require coordination and collaboration between Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) recipients and the Continuum of Care on operating within the jurisdiction in determining how to allocate ESG funds, and to set policy related to the homeless response system.
 - **EOHHS:** Administers:
 - Nursing Home Transition and Money Follows the Person: Offers support to Rhode Islanders who are interested in returning to the community from a nursing home.
 - Support and Services at Home (SASH): Supports the health and wellbeing of Medicare recipients. The program is designed so people can have improved quality of life, keep healthy and remain living in their homes.
 - Accessory Dwelling Unit Pilot: The Rhode Island State Legislature passed H. 7942/S. 2323 in 2022, which allows easier development of Accessory Dwellings (ADUs) in most Rhode Island municipalities. This statute will be leveraged by a proposed pilot program, supported with Money Follows the Person (MFP) rebalancing funds, to create meaningful new affordable and accessible housing opportunities for Medicaid waiver recipients.
 - Medical Respite and Mobile Wound Care Pilot: Serves people experiencing housing insecurity or homelessness with acute medical and behavioral health support needs.
 - **RIHousing:**
 - Administers special needs vouchers for homeless, veterans and children aging out of foster care.
 - Finances development of Permanent Supportive Housing
 - **BHDDH:**

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- BHDDH has levels of care that include long-term residential programs for individuals with Intellectual and/or Developmental Disabilities (I/DD) and Serious and Persistent Mental Illness (SPMI).
- Administers a Thresholds Program that provides funding for the acquisition and/or rehabilitation of new or existing housing opportunities for individuals with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.
- Administers Recovery Housing, and per the general law, all Recovery Housing must comply with the National Association of Recovery Residence (NARR) standards and all programs receiving these funds are certified by Rhode Island Communities for Addiction Recovery Efforts (RICARES) through a contract with BHDDH.
- **Department of Public Safety, Public Safety Grant Administration Office:** Grant funded programming for organizations that serve survivors of domestic violence and/or sexual assault.
- **Governor's Overdose Task Force:** Advisory
- **Opioid Settlement Committee:** Homelessness Prevention and Recovery Housing

Regulation/Enforcement:

- **RIDOH:** Nursing home regulation and licensing.
- **RICoC:** Annual monitoring of CoC recipient agencies, working with the Funding Committee to hold agencies accountable to system performance standards.
- **EOHHS:** Monitors contracts to ensure that funds are being utilized within the terms and allowable uses of the funding sources. Additionally, EOHHS continues to contribute to the state's whole-of-government approach to Olmstead Planning.
- **RIHousing:** Ensure compliance with state and federal requirements associated with administered programs.
- **BHDDH:**
 - Oversight and enforcement of Thresholds Program:
 - Certification (through RICARES) of recovery housing, adhering to the standards of the National Association of Recovery Residences. BHDDH conducts audits every two years to ensure compliance with its contractual mandates and deliverables.
 - Licenses agencies that use Medicaid billable support services that can be coupled with affordable housing units in the community.
- **Opioid Settlement Committee:** Opioid Settlement Agreement

Data:

- **Department of Housing:** As part of the Department's integrated housing report, the Department will conduct an assessment of the suitability of existing housing stock in meeting accessibility needs of residents. The first assessment will be conducted for the 2026 report and every three years thereafter, all contingent upon funding for data collection. As part of the Department's agency budget submission, funding was requested to support this data collection. Currently there is not available data on the number of accessible units and the current need for accessible units in the state.

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- **DHS:** Integrated eligibility system captures data on living situations and documents activities with families in case notes.
- **RI Developmental Disabilities Council:** Reports on housing to federal government and provides comprehensive review every five years.
- **RICoC:**
 - Designates the HMIS Lead in the state, which works with all ESG and CoC-funded projects. This includes submitting all mandated reports to HUD on time and accurately, including the Point in Time (PIT) Count, the Housing Inventory Count (HIC), the Longitudinal System Analysis (LSA), and the System Performance Measures (SPM) report, among other responsibilities.
- **EOHHS:**
 - Tracks data for populations served through Medicaid, and other state programs within the Ecosystem. Additional data may include HMIS and vendor reporting.
 - Monitors contract deliverables, outcomes, and tracking the utilization of state resources allocated for housing initiatives.
- **RI Housing:** Tracks information on tenants assisted and developments financed through the programs we administer.
- **BHDDH:** Collects the following data from the Recovery Housing program: number of admissions, discharge reason, housing after discharge, demographics, social drivers of health
- **Governor's Overdose Task Force:** Strategic plan alignment and target setting

Review of Current State Statute:

Strategy/Planning:

- Housing Resources Commission:
(§ 42-128-8.1. Housing production and rehabilitation.)
 - Strategic plan. The commission, in conjunction with the statewide planning program, shall develop by July 1, 2006, a five-year (5) strategic plan for housing, which plan shall be adopted as an element of the state guide plan, and which shall include quantified goals, measurable intermediate steps toward the accomplishment of the goals, implementation activities, and standards for the production and/or rehabilitation of year-round housing to meet the housing needs including, but not limited to, the following: Older Rhode Islanders, including senior citizens, appropriate, affordable housing options; Students, dormitory, student housing and other residential options; Persons with disabilities, appropriate housing; and Vulnerable individuals and families, permanent housing, single-room occupancy units, transitional housing and shelters.

Programs/Financing:

- Housing Resources Commission:
(§ 42-128-2. Rhode Island housing resources agency created.)
 - There is hereby established a restricted receipt account within the general fund of the state. Funds from this account shall be used to provide for housing and homelessness initiatives including housing production, lead hazard abatement, housing rental subsidy, housing retention assistance, and homelessness services

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and prevention assistance with priority to veterans. Effective December 31, 2024 or after fulfillment of the reporting requirements established under §42-64.34-1(vi), whichever is later, the restricted account established under §42-128-2(3) shall be administered by the Department of Housing in consultation with the Housing Resources Commission. Funds in this account will be used in accordance with the uses established in § 42-128-2(3).

(§ 42-128-5)

- To encourage and support partnerships between institutions of higher education and neighborhoods to develop and retain quality, healthy housing and sustainable communities.

(§ 42-128-8.1)

- The state must maintain a comprehensive housing strategy applicable to all cities and towns that addresses the housing needs of different populations including, but not limited to, workers and their families who earn less than one hundred twenty percent (120%) of median income, older citizens, students attending institutions of higher education, low- and very-low income individuals and families, and vulnerable populations including, but not limited to, persons with disabilities, homeless individuals and families, and individuals released from correctional institutions.

- RIHousing

(§ 42-55-8. Supervision of housing sponsors and health care sponsors.)

- The corporation shall have the power to supervise housing sponsors of multi-family residential housing units and single family residential housing units designed by the sponsor for occupancy primarily by persons and families of low and moderate income or sponsors of health care facilities and their real and personal property in the following respects...

Regulation/Enforcement:

- RIDOH

(§ 23-17-5)

- An application for a license shall be made to the licensing agency upon forms provided by it and shall contain any information that the licensing agency reasonably requires, which may include affirmative evidence of ability to comply with reasonable standards, rules, and regulations that are lawfully prescribed under this chapter. Each application shall be accompanied by payment of the fees prescribed in accordance with § 23-17-38.

Review of Prior Report Findings:

Current system opportunities/gaps:

Boston Consulting Group and The Rhode Island Foundation 2023 Report:

- There is not enough housing in RI for seniors
- There is need for a "much expanded" diversion program that can be delivered by all providers, and with less strings attached

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- Based on state benchmarking the following are potential functions of a state housing department related to specialized housing
 - Apply for and manage federal programs:
 - Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA)
 - Supportive Housing for Elderly
 - Supportive Housing for Persons with Disabilities
- There are not enough shelter options and supportive services for individuals with substance use disorder (SUD).

Summary of Stakeholder Input:

Current system opportunities/gaps:

Service Gaps

- Transitional and Supportive Housing Options
 - Gap: Transitional housing options, especially for individuals with specialized needs such as behavioral health issues, disabilities, and substance use disorders, are limited. Without access to supportive environments, these individuals are at a higher risk of repeated homelessness or housing instability.
 - Function Needed: More transitional housing facilities with integrated support services are needed. Developing partnerships with behavioral health providers and expanding programs that offer both housing and case management support would fill this gap.

Outreach and Access

- Comprehensive Outreach and Engagement for Hard-to-Reach Populations
 - Gap: Certain populations, including individuals with mental health issues, undocumented individuals, and people experiencing chronic homelessness, may not engage with traditional service models and are therefore underserved.
 - Function Needed: Outreach teams focused on connecting with hard-to-reach populations are needed. These teams could work directly in the community, offering on-the-ground support, building trust, and linking individuals to necessary services. Additionally, mobile service units that provide on-site assistance and resources would improve accessibility.

Interagency Coordination

- The Department of Housing and EOHHS agencies partnering and coordinating will improve the outcomes for people experiencing homelessness, entering recovery, or housing insecure. Utilization of Medicaid reimbursable services to ensure supportive housing services will allow the Dept. of Housing to focus on housing and operating planning.

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POLICY AREA 5: PRESERVATION, HEALTH, AND SAFETY OF EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

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Policy Area 5: Preservation, Health, and Safety of Existing Housing Stock

Policy Area Overview: Preservation relates to ensuring existing housing remains in good repair and available for habitation. For example, managing home repair programs; healthy housing (e.g., lead, mold, asbestos); building inspections; enforcement of code requirements; etc.

Review of Organizational Survey Responses:

28% of respondents (10/36) noted they had a role in preservation, health, and safety of existing housing stock

Strategy/Planning:

- **Department of Housing:** The Department contributes to the planning and design of housing preservation efforts through the State’s budgeting process. Through the Department’s staffing of the HRC, the Department is involved with reporting on the State’s lead hazard mitigation program, which is implemented by the Department of Health per a Memorandum of Understanding, and the Monitoring Agents program.
- **PUC:** Implements policy through programs that directly and indirectly impact health and safety of housing stock.
- **Department of Business Regulation:** Promulgation and enforcement of fire and building codes.
- **EOHHS:** Contributes to efforts aimed at maintaining healthy housing conditions for vulnerable populations, ensuring that housing remains a safe environment, free from hazards and able to be accessed.
- **RIHousing:** Development of Consolidated Plan and QAP

Programs/Financing:

- **Department of Housing:** The Department supports programs such as CDBG Home Repair, SFRF Home Repair, and the Preservation of Affordable Homes program (through SFRF funds). The Department also partners with RI Housing to develop guidelines for SFRF and bond-funded programs, some of which support preservation. In addition, the Landlord Tenant Handbook provides information about required health and safety standards of rental units.
- **HRC:**
 - The HRC is statutorily charged with reporting on the State’s lead hazard mitigation program. Lead hazard mitigation program responsibilities are implemented by the Department of Health per an MOU.
 - HRC’s contributions to the Consolidated Homelessness Fund have supported initiatives such as landlord incentives, which have financed unit repairs.
 - The Building Homes Rhode Island program has supported the preservation of existing affordable homes.
- **RIDOH:**
 - Tobacco Control Program: Manages approximately 70 calls inquiries annually to provide technical assistance requests related to secondhand smoke or product related inquiries related to RI Gen Laws “Public Health and Workplace Safety Act.” The work allows for educating tenants, landlords/property managers, and

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building associations with rights to smoke free policies in multi-unit residential settings.

- **PUC:** Oversees energy efficiency programs that can include or work in tandem with remediation actions necessary to implement efficiency improvements. Other examples of programs are the PUC's oversight of regulated water utilities' lead pipe replacement programs.
- **RI Dept of Labor:** Investments via Real Jobs RI into sector-based industry trainings in construction.
- **EOHHS:**
 - Homelessness Prevention Grant: Administers \$2.25 million in rolling grant opportunities for homelessness prevention initiatives for priority populations.
 - 1115 Waiver: Transitional supports pursued in the 1115 waiver includes appropriate modifications to improve the safety, health, and accessibility of housing units.
 - Olmstead Planning
- **Coastal Resources Management Council:** Regulatory programs that address maintenance of existing structures such that balanced management of coastal resources are achieved. CRMC has no financing programs nor financial assistance
- **RIHousing:** Finance the preservation of affordable housing. Administer state and federal lead hazard reduction funds.

Regulation/Enforcement:

- **Department of Housing:** Through its shared staffing of the HRC, the Department is involved with the regulation and enforcement of the lead safety program.
- **HRC:**
 - Oversees the Monitoring Agents program, which ensures that low- and moderate-income rental and homeownership units follow all requirements and deed restrictions are followed.
 - Lead hazard mitigation regulatory responsibilities are implemented by the Department of Health per a Memorandum of Understanding.
- **PUC:** Regulates implementation of programs and rates. For example, the PUC does regulate investments in lead pipe replacement, but the PUC is not the body that determines if lead pipes are hazardous to the public.
- **RIDOH:** The Center for Healthy Homes and Environment (CHHE) regulates lead, asbestos and radon hazard control by statute. CHHE also promotes climate resiliency and adaptation.
- **Department of Environmental Management:** Permitting programs for wetlands, septic systems, stormwater, and brownfields
- **Department of Business Regulation:** Promulgation and enforcement of fire and building codes.
- **EOHHS:** Works with other state agencies to enforce regulations on housing safety, particularly for populations in specialized housing or those receiving healthcare services at home. EOHHS monitors contracts to ensure that funds are being utilized within the terms and allowable uses of the funding sources.

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- **RIHousing:** Ensure compliance with state and federal requirements of administered programs.

Data:

- **Department of Housing:** Data on the lead hazard mitigation program is reported annually in the integrated housing report.
- **HRC:** Annual lead hazard mitigation program reporting
- **PUC:** Requires utilities to provide data related to program spending and other performance metrics.
- **Department of Environmental Management:** Some brownfields cleanup work
- **EOHHS:**
 - Tracks data for populations served through Medicaid, and other state programs within the Ecosystem. Additional data may include HMIS and vendor reporting.
 - Monitors contract deliverables, outcomes, and tracking the utilization of state resources allocated for housing initiatives.
- **RIHousing:** Tracks information on developments financed and households assisted.

Review of Current State Statute:

Strategy/Planning:

- Housing Resources Commission:
(§ 42-128-5. Purposes.)
 - To provide opportunities for safe, sanitary, decent, adequate and affordable housing in Rhode Island.
 - To encourage public-private partnerships that foster the production, rehabilitation, development, maintenance, and improvement of housing and housing conditions, especially for low and moderate income people.
 - To encourage and support partnerships between institutions of higher education and neighborhoods to develop and retain quality, healthy housing and sustainable communities.
 - To facilitate private for-profit production and rehabilitation of housing for diverse populations and income groups.
(§ 42-128-8.1. Housing production and rehabilitation.)
 - Strategic plan. The commission, in conjunction with the statewide planning program, shall develop by July 1, 2006, a five-year (5) strategic plan for housing, which plan shall be adopted as an element of the state guide plan, and which shall include quantified goals, measurable intermediate steps toward the accomplishment of the goals, implementation activities, and standards for the production and/or rehabilitation of year-round housing to meet the housing needs including, but not limited to, the following:

Programs/Financing:

- Department of Housing:
(§ 42-64.34-2. Powers and duties.)

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- To purchase, receive, lease, or otherwise acquire, own, hold, improve, use, and otherwise deal in and with, real or personal property, or any interest in real or personal property, wherever situated;
- Housing Resources Commission:
- Housing Resources Commission:
(§ 42-128-2. Rhode Island housing resources agency created.)
 - There is hereby established a restricted receipt account within the general fund of the state. Funds from this account shall be used to provide for housing and homelessness initiatives including housing production, lead hazard abatement, housing rental subsidy, housing retention assistance, and homelessness services and prevention assistance with priority to veterans. Effective December 31, 2024 or after fulfillment of the reporting requirements established under §42-64.34-1(vi), whichever is later, the restricted account established under §42-128-2(3) shall be administered by the Department of Housing in consultation with the Housing Resources Commission. Funds in this account will be used in accordance with the uses established in § 42-128-2(3).
- (§ 42-128-8. Powers and duties.)
 - Administer the programs pertaining to housing resources that may be assigned by state law. The commission shall have the power and duty to administer programs for housing, housing services, and community development, including, but not limited to, programs pertaining to: Abandoned properties and the remediation of blighting conditions; Lead abatement and to manage a lead hazard abatement program in cooperation with the Rhode Island housing and mortgage finance corporation.
- RIHousing:
(§ 42-55-6. Powers relative to making loans.)
 - Make, undertake commitments to make, and participate in the making of mortgage loans to persons of low or moderate income for the purpose of improving septic systems and wells on their residential property to substantially comply with standards as set by the department of environmental management and/or the department of health. Any loan made pursuant to this subdivision may be secured by a mortgage or otherwise shall be repaid, shall bear interest, and shall be upon those terms and conditions that may be determined by the corporation;
 - Make and participate in the making of grants to assist in the construction, rehabilitation, or operation of residential housing;
 - Establish the Environmentally Compromised Home Opportunity (ECHO) loan program. The corporation may make, undertake commitments to make, and participate in the making of loans to persons owning residential property, the value of which has been significantly reduced by contamination.
- (§ 42-55-7. Powers relative to purchase of and sale to mortgage lenders of loans — Loans to mortgage lender.)
 - To invest in, purchase or to make commitments to purchase, and take assignments from mortgage lenders, of notes and mortgages evidencing loans for the construction, rehabilitation, installation of energy saving improvements to,

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purchase, leasing, or refinancing of housing for persons and families of low and moderate income or health care facilities in this state upon the terms set forth in § 42-55-10;

(§ 42-55-7.1. Powers relative to acquisition and operation of housing projects.)

- To construct, reconstruct, rehabilitate, improve, alter, repair, or provide for the construction, reconstruction, improvement, alteration, or repair of any housing project;

(§ 42-55-27. Lead paint removal revolving fund.)

- There is created, as a separate fund within the treasury, the lead paint removal revolving fund. The fund shall consist of any sums that the state may from time to time appropriate, as well as money received from donations, gifts, bequests, or otherwise from any public or private source, which money is intended to implement and encourage lead paint removal. The treasurer shall contract with the Rhode Island housing and mortgage finance corporation for the administration and disbursement of funding. The Rhode Island housing and mortgage finance corporation shall adopt rules and regulations in conjunction with the department of health and appropriate community groups consistent with the purposes of this section and the Administrative Procedures Act, chapter 35 of this title, which provide for the orderly and equitable disbursement and repayment of funds.

Data:

- Housing Resources Commission:

(§ 42-128-16. Annual report.)

- The commission shall submit for each calendar year by March 1 of the next year a report to the governor and the general assembly on its activities and its findings and recommendations regarding housing issues, which report by census tract, shall include the number and dollar amount of its programs and an assessment of health related housing issues, including the incidence of lead poisoning.

Review of Prior Report Findings:

Current system opportunities/gaps:

Boston Consulting Group and The Rhode Island Foundation 2023 Report:

- Based on state benchmarking the following are potential functions of a state housing department related to housing preservation:
 - Plan for long-term housing updates
 - Mandate regular upkeep of housing
 - Mandate tenant protections from landlords
 - Enforce maintenance of affordable housing
 - Enforce necessary structural renovation
 - Apply for and manage federal Housing Trust Fund
 - Structural renovations
 - HVAC/utilities updates
 - Electrification
 - Historic building preservation
 - Collect and analyze data (e.g., which buildings need support, etc.)

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The 2023 RI Integrated Housing Survey:

- **Deploying new surveys.** Where there are gaps in high-impact data that can only be filled through surveys, the State may wish to identify funding for periodic surveys. For example, funding for a survey conducted every three years on housing accessibility features and the presence of health hazards in housing units would help guide priorities and funding for better meeting accessibility and health needs of Rhode Island residents.

Summary of Stakeholder Input:

Current system opportunities/gaps:

Health and Safety Regulation:

- Efforts to increase the number of lead professionals such as lead inspectors, lead renovators and lead abatement contractors.
- Asbestos statute does not give RIDOH authority over one- and two-family homes leaving some potential for asbestos exposure in those settings. Radon statute does not give RIDOH authority in residential dwellings of any kind.

Strategic Planning

- We have been asked to deal with highly complex, extremely time sensitive, and project-specific code reviews and/or inspections relative to, in particular, short-term homelessness solutions. Accordingly, we would recommend a longer-view, strategic approach whereby properties/development opportunities are identified in advance of seasonal or event-driven crises.

Housing Stock Preservation:

- There are not enough resources available to help lower income property owners make repairs, improve energy efficiency, or build ADUs.

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Policy Area 6: Climate and Energy

Policy Area Overview: This area includes areas such as climate resilience, climate adaptation, renewable energy, energy infrastructure, energy efficiency/use related to housing.

Review of Organizational Survey Responses:

36% of respondents (13/36) noted they had a role in climate and energy

Strategy/Planning:

- **Department of Housing:**

- The Department is collaborating with Statewide Planning to consider options for integrating climate into the state housing plan from a land use perspective. Additionally, energy/climate is anticipated to be a cross-cutting theme within the state housing plan.
- The Department seeks to support state and regional efforts to achieve carbon reduction targets in the Act On Climate and other initiatives, interacting regularly with governor's policy office and OER to ensure that building/ housing sector adds to attainment of goals in Act on Climate. While we are not directly involved with driving climate or energy policy, the Department seeks to raise awareness of federal and state incentives to reduce energy consumption and foster growth of renewables and storage in all areas of housing sector. The Department has been invited to join the EC4.

- **HRC:** Serves as the executive department agency responsible for developing housing policies, plans, and standards per RIGL 42-128. Has statutory authority (RIGL 42-128-8.1) to develop and implement the state's strategic housing plan and coordinate housing activities across state agencies and political subdivisions.

- **PUC:** Aligns utilities' business practices with the public interest, including the mandates of the Act on Climate, as well as other statutory requirements related to energy supply and infrastructure. Opens dockets to investigate if policy changes are necessary to better align utility business practice with public interest.

- **Department of Environmental Management:** Chair of Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council, working on reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and resiliency.

- **Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA):** Advocates for smart growth, TOD, and mode shift to support Rhode Island's climate goals and reduce GHG emissions; inviting housing developments to provide transit passes to residents at no/reduced cost.

- **RIHousing:** Develops of Consolidated Plan and QAP.

- **RI Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (RIEC4):** Responsibility and oversight relating to assessing, integrating, and coordinating climate change efforts across state government.

- **Division of Public Utilities and Carriers:** Advocates for ratepayers in all regulated utility proceedings, including Rhode Island Energy's Energy Efficiency Plans, Renewable Energy project tariffs and ratepayer costs, plans related to Electric Vehicles and infrastructure.

- **Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency:** Serves as a member of EC4 Council

Programs/Financing:

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- **Department of Housing:** There are no state programs on energy or renewables administered by the Department presently. The Department will continue to publicize and broadcast federal initiatives that are available to RI housing and homelessness sector, both non-profit and for profit, and public housing authorities. Additionally, projects that take into account climate and energy goals or utilize green building strategies may be given preference in procurement
- **HRC:** HRC is able to prioritize projects that include certain factors, including climate change, environment, and energy issues
- **PUC:** Utilities file plans to procure energy, invest in energy infrastructure, or ask for rate recovery for investments made. PUC determines the prudence of these proposals and whether the utility may collect costs for ratepayers.
- **DHS:**
 - Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP): Helps eligible low-income households pay their heating bills through federal grants.
 - Weatherization Assistance Program: Provides services to reduce energy consumption in homes.
- **RI Department of Labor and Training:** Invests in green economy workforce development initiatives.
- **Department of Environmental Management:** Administers some grant-related programs.
- **Coastal Resources Management Council:**
 - Regulatory programs that review and assent individual parcel development within the CRMC's primary jurisdiction.
 - For ocean renewable energy projects in state waters, direct regulatory programs.
 - For ocean renewable energy projects in federal waters, direct review authorities only, and then under allowable and applicable federal laws, with the ability to affect the siting of renewable activities in relation to the affectation to RI's coastal resources.
- **RIHousing:**
 - Funds ZEOS program in partnership with OER and RI Energy to finance development of Net Zero affordable housing. Prioritizes financing for development of housing that meets higher energy efficiency standards and utilizes solar/renewable energy.
- **RI Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (RIEC4):** Develops and offers various programs that promote energy efficiency, renewable energy and resilient building/infrastructure design. Each agency/office is responsible for implementing its own programs, with larger policy issues being vetted through the RIEC4.
- **Division of Public Utilities and Carriers:** Approves long-term debt entered into by regulated utilities.

Regulation/Enforcement:

- **PUC:** Oversees rate recovery and determines prudence – the PUC regulates utilities' business practices and decisions related to climate and energy.
- **RIHousing:** Comply with all state and federal requirements for the programs we administer.

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- **RI Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (RIEC4):** The RIEC4 is not a regulatory entity. Only a handful of members (e.g. DEM) are considered enforcement agencies.
- **Division of Public Utilities and Carriers:**
 - Regulates compliance by regulated utilities to ensure analysis of cost/benefit for any investments or rates charged by the utilities
 - DPUC has a federally funded gas pipeline team that inspects for safety
 - DPUC has a consumer team that assists consumers with billing or meter disputes, payment plans for low income, and termination processes.

Data:

- **Department of Housing:** The Department does not presently collect data related to climate and energy policy
- **PUC:** Requires energy suppliers to provide data about the volume, sources, and emissions associated with the energy they serve retail customers. The PUC also collect actual energy and emissions data from energy utilities, as well as near-term and long-term forecasts of energy use.
- **DHS:** Integrated eligibility system captures data on living situations and documents activities with families in case notes.
- **Department of Environmental Management:** Lead agency for conducting the annual state greenhouse gas emissions inventory
- **RIHousing:** Tracks information on the developments we finance.
- **RI Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council (RIEC4):** Many of the members of the RIEC4 perform their own data collection (e.g. home efficiency rebates, renewables).
- **Division of Public Utilities and Carriers:** Engages analysts/consultants to verify claimed impacts, costs and benefits for reliable/safe energy and climate.

Review of Current State Statute:

Strategy/Planning:

- Housing Resources Commission:
(§ 42-128-5. Purposes.)
 - To encourage and support partnerships between institutions of higher education and neighborhoods to develop and retain quality, healthy housing and sustainable communities.
- (§ 42-128-8.1. Housing production and rehabilitation.)
 - Guidelines. The commission shall advise the state planning council and the state planning council shall promulgate and adopt not later than July 1, 2006, guidelines for higher density development, including, but not limited to: (1) Inclusionary zoning provisions for low- and moderate-income housing with appropriate density bonuses and other subsidies that make the development financially feasible; and (2) Mixed-use development that includes residential development, which guidelines shall take into account infrastructure availability; soil type and land capacity; environmental protection; water supply protection;

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and agricultural, open space, historical preservation, and community development pattern constraints.

- Statewide Planning:
(§ 42-11-10. Statewide planning program.)
 - State guide plan. Components of strategic plans prepared and adopted in accordance with this section may be designated as elements of the state guide plan. The state guide plan shall be comprised of functional elements or plans dealing with land use; physical development and environmental concerns; economic development; housing production; energy supply, including the development of renewable energy resources in Rhode Island, and energy access, use, and conservation; human services; climate change and resiliency; and other factors necessary to accomplish the objective of this section. The state guide plan shall be a means for centralizing, integrating, and monitoring long-range goals, policies, plans, and implementation activities related thereto. State agencies concerned with specific subject areas, local governments, and the public shall participate in the state guide planning process, which shall be closely coordinated with the budgeting process.
- RIHousing:
(§ 42-55-5.4. Renewable energy in housing developments.)
 - On or before July 1, 2009, the corporation shall establish, in appropriate housing development programs it administers, criteria for priority consideration of housing development proposals which include renewable energy features which are demonstrated to be cost-effective and can be implemented in a reasonable period of time.

Programs/Financing:

- RIHousing:
(§ 42-55-5. General powers.)
 - Stimulate environmental planning for housing for persons of low and moderate income in order to enhance opportunities of those persons for self-development and employment;
- (§ 42-55-6. Powers relative to making loans.)
 - Make, undertake commitments to make, and participate in the making of mortgage loans, including without limitation federally insured mortgage loans, and to make temporary loans and advances in anticipation of permanent mortgage loans to housing sponsors or health care sponsors to finance the construction or rehabilitation of, or installation of energy saving improvements to, residential housing designed and planned for occupancy primarily by persons and families of low and moderate income or health care facilities upon the terms and conditions set forth in § 42-55-9;
 - Make, undertake commitments to make, and participate in the making of loans to persons of low or moderate income for the purpose of making energy saving improvements to residential housing. Any loan made pursuant to this paragraph may be secured by a mortgage or otherwise, shall be repaid, shall bear interest and shall be upon any terms and conditions that may be determined by the corporation;

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(§ 42-55-7. Powers relative to purchase of and sale to mortgage lenders of loans — Loans to mortgage lender.)

- To invest in, purchase or to make commitments to purchase, and take assignments from mortgage lenders, of notes and mortgages evidencing loans for the construction, rehabilitation, installation of energy saving improvements to, purchase, leasing, or refinancing of housing for persons and families of low and moderate income or health care facilities in this state upon the terms set forth in § 42-55-10;

Review of Prior Report Findings:

Current system opportunities/gaps:

Boston Consulting Group and The Rhode Island Foundation 2023 Report:

- Based on state benchmarking the following are potential functions of a state housing department related to climate and energy
 - Plan for long-term health and safety updates
 - Prepare state housing for climate disasters (e.g., emergency action plan and prevention)
 - Mandate climate conscious building choices
 - Mandate safe building practices
 - Mandate lead abatement
 - Enforce climate conscious building choices
 - Review/approve new developments for environmental considerations (e.g., California Coastal Commission)
 - Enforce safe building practices
 - Enforce home safety inspections
 - Apply for and manage federal programs:
 - Community Development Block Grant
 - Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR)
 - Climate related renovations
 - Energy efficiency programs
 - Lead abatement
 - Structural integrity
 - Weatherization program (WAP)

Summary of Stakeholder Input:

Current system opportunities/gaps:

- Include the Department of Housing and RI Housing on the EC4
- Being proactive and considering how homes are being built/rehabbed (from an energy perspective) and where they are being built (from a resilience perspective to avoid flooding) is a conversation the RIEC4 would like to advance with the housing community.

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POLICY AREA 7: HOMELESSNESS
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Policy Area 7: Homelessness

Policy Area Overview: Homelessness includes activities related to addressing homelessness, including prevention, intervention, and planning activities.

Review of Organizational Survey Responses:

39% of respondents (14/36) noted they had a role in homelessness

Strategy/Planning:

- **Department of Housing:** The Department of Housing is charged in statute as the lead agency on homelessness for the State. Preventing homelessness and assisting those who have experienced or are at risk of experiencing homelessness is a central focus and responsibility of the Department.
 - Homelessness – and more specifically developing the housing needed to prevent and respond to homelessness – is anticipated to be a priority within the state housing plan that the Department is working on (described in more detail within Housing Development).
 - The Department has developed budget proposals requesting state funding to support its homelessness efforts.
 - The Department collaborated with RI Housing to incorporate further prioritization of homes for extremely low-income and people who have experienced homelessness into the qualified allocation plan (QAP).
 - In the winter of 2023-24, the Department partnered to conduct the planning necessary to help providers identify properties to accommodate an increase in housing/shelter capacity. This included engaging closely with municipalities on identifying facility options. As a result, the number of shelter beds available in Rhode Island was increased by more than 30%.
 - Collaboration on consolidated plan which articulates federal funding priorities.
 - Of note, the predecessor entity to the Department – OHCD – was charged with convening the Interagency Council on Homelessness, which has not met for several years. The Department has recently discussed reconvening this group as part of its charge to address homelessness.
- **HRC:**
 - Serves as the executive department agency responsible for developing housing policies, plans, and standards per RIGL 42-128. Has statutory authority (RIGL 42-128-8.1) to develop and implement the state's strategic housing plan and coordinate housing activities across state agencies and political subdivisions.
 - The HRC's contributions to the Consolidated Homelessness Fund have supported initiatives such as the HMIS system.
- **HRC Coordinating Committee:** The Coordinating Committee's roles in establishing an interagency MOU and establishing guidelines for the housing production fund could influence homelessness. The housing production fund statute requires RI Housing to prioritize households exiting homelessness or earning not more than 30% of AMI.
- **DCYF:**
 - Engages with the Homeless and Housing Support System to identify strategies to address family and youth homelessness.

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- Collaborates with Family Community Care Partnerships (FCCPs) to expand mission to support unhoused families, aiming to prevent their involvement in the child welfare system.
- Develops procedures within Support and Response Unit to assist families in navigating housing insecurity.
- **Office of the Child Advocate:** Homelessness impacts many of the youth we work with who transition from DCYF care due to lack of affordable housing or lack of necessary supports. We advocate for access to housing and work with other providers to develop solutions to this growing issue impacting our youth.
- **Department of Business Regulation:** Collaborates with property owners, State entities, and local jurisdictions relating to repurposing of existing structures as temporary or long-term housing.
- **RICoC:** Policymaking lead on local issues related to ending homelessness in Rhode Island. The CoC Board and CoC Committees set strategy, policy, and planning priorities for the Rhode Island homeless response system. This work necessarily includes incorporating strategy, policy, and planning priorities on both housing affordability and access and on specialized housing for specific subpopulations, for example those experiencing chronic homelessness, youth experiencing homelessness, and households fleeing domestic violence.
- **EOHHS:** Develops homelessness prevention strategies and initiatives, integrating health services with housing solutions to address the root causes of homelessness. EOHHS coordinates statewide efforts to reduce homelessness through comprehensive health and housing initiatives and interventions.
- **RIHousing:** Develops a Consolidated Plan and Fair Housing plan.
- **BHDDH:** Has a position that works across the Departments, Commissions, quasi-public agencies to increase access to housing opportunities, develop programs, policies and practices that address housing support and retention services, and liaison with housing programs to address service gaps. The position represents the Director on the Housing Resource Commission, is on Membership of the Continuum of Care, represents the Department at various planning and policy committees, including Olmstead, the Health Planning Cabinet, the Continuum of Care Pipeline committee, the Behavioral Health Plan, and local health equity zones.
- **Governor's Overdose Task Force:** The Task Force is the center of all drug overdose prevention and intervention activities in the state. The Task Force and its workgroups are responsible for addressing the overdose crisis and serves as an advisory for strategic planning, emerging issues, and addressing social determinants of health.

Programs/Financing:

- **Department of Housing:**
 - The Department administers programs providing Temporary Emergency Shelter, Rapid Rehousing and Housing Navigation, supportive services, housing navigation, street outreach, homelessness prevention, housing problem solving, and systems coordination. These efforts are funded annually through the Consolidated Homelessness Fund (CHF), which is comprised of funding from HUD's Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG), federal Title XX funds through the Department of Human Services, and the Housing Resources and Homelessness

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restricted receipt account. In recent years, these efforts have been significantly funded by time-limited State Fiscal Recovery Funds.

- The Department administers an SFRF-funded municipal homelessness support initiative, which provides grant funding to municipalities that host new or expanded overnight shelters and winter emergency hubs. Awards assist municipalities with public safety expenses and other municipal services that support individuals and families experiencing homelessness.
- The Department developed the priority projects fund to allocate resources to development projects that include units for people who have experienced homelessness and/or extremely low income Rhode Islanders
- **HRC:**
 - HRC invests into the Consolidated Homelessness Fund (CHF), which allocates funding to shelter operations, outreach, rapid re-housing rental assistance, and systems supports (including the coordinated entry system). Through the Consolidated Homelessness Fund process, Housing Resources Commission; the State of Rhode Island Department of Housing; and the Department of Human Services collaborate to make funding decisions.
 - Collaborates with other funders on the Continuum of Care/ESG funding committee.
 - Funds the development of new housing through the Extremely Low-Income Capital and Operating programs through the Housing Resources Commission restricted receipt account (renamed to Housing Resources and Homelessness restricted receipt account).
- **RIDOH:**
 - Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury: Rhode Island does not currently have step-down options available when clients living with traumatic brain injuries (TBI) are discharged from inpatient rehabilitation hospitals and unable to go home. Some examples of concerns elevated include inability to maintain rent payments due to the logistical and financial strain of recovery. Survivors are losing homes due to brain injuries, are not able to work to continue to pay bills, and resource delivery is a challenge.
 - Rape Prevention and Education: Educate and advocate for shelters to be inclusive or affirming for individuals who are LGBTQ+; support the RI Coalition Against Domestic Violence actions to identify affordable properties for transitional housing and shelters.
 - Reducing Maternal Violence and Mortality: Implement the MOSAIC program, a mother mentorship program, to build resiliency. One aspect of the work is to address housing instability and insecurity.
 - Perinatal and Early Childhood Health (PECH) program: Links families to services related to housing affordability and access.
 - Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Program: Addressing housing affordability and access as a major structural determinant of health for RI families and people with disabilities.
- **DHS:** Provides comprehensive services related to homelessness prevention and intervention. These services include helping individuals and families relocate if they are in unsafe or uninhabitable housing and offering emergency assistance for those

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experiencing homelessness or at risk due to eviction, foreclosure, or domestic violence. Emergency shelter services are also available for those affected by catastrophes like fire or severe weather.

- **DCYF:**
 - Over the past two years, DCYF has spent millions supporting families in hotels, both as a preventive measure to keep them from entering our system and as mandated by court orders for families already involved with the Department. In response, we have actively pursued strategies to better support the homeless population, including partnerships with Family Community Care Partnerships (FCCPs), the Continuum of Care (CoC), and housing agencies.
- **Rhode Island Public Transit Authority (RIPTA):** Piloting a fare benefit program in partnership with organizations serving people experiencing housing insecurity, to provide free public transportation to this population
- **RICoC:** The CoC oversees a portfolio of over \$15 million dollars annually in funding for Rhode Island's homeless response system. Additionally, federal regulations require coordination and collaboration between Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) recipients and the Continuum of Care on operating within the jurisdiction in determining how to allocate ESG funds, and to set policy related to the homeless response system. The CoC's Funding Committee functions as the review committee for CoC-funded projects, and for the Consolidated Homeless Fund. Additionally, entitlement recipients of other HUD funds (such as CDBG) must consult with their CoC on local need and priorities when developing their 5-Year Plans for investing HUD funds to ensure alignment and consistency.
- **EOHHS:**
 - Justice-Involved Homelessness Prevention Initiatives: Funds from the Opioid Settlement are being made available to the DOC for the purpose of improving housing stability upon community transition for individuals with or at risk of OUD/SUD.
 - Unsheltered Supportive Services: EOHHS holds funding in reserve for an MOU with the Department of Housing for Winter, should warming stations or navigation centers be utilized.
 - Additional Programs that apply to this Policy Area include: Pay for Success, Homelessness Prevention Initiative Grant, Medical Respite and Mobile Wound Care
- **RIHousing:** Administers rental assistance programs for homeless populations and development of Permanent Supportive Housing. Funds services for homeless in affordable developments.
- **BHDDH:**
 - Receives a grant from Projects for the Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). This grant provides \$300,000 annually to provide outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness who have severe and persistent mental illness.
 - The goal of the Rhode Island Systems, Engagement and Navigation grant (RISEN) is to reduce the number of people experiencing homelessness in Rhode Island due to untreated mental health (MH), substance use (SUD), or co-occurring

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disorders (COD) through connections to treatment and services. The RISEN program will co-locate in shelters and public housing authorities to outreach individuals identified as homeless or at risk for eviction due to untreated behavioral health concerns.

- **Governor's Overdose Task Force:** Advisory role

Regulation/Enforcement:

- **Department of Housing:** The Department plays a role in establishing and determining standards for the State's shelter system.
- **Office of the Child Advocate:** When youth who are eligible for supports through DCYF are brought to our attention and are homeless, we advocate within the individual case to ensure the youth is provided with necessary supports to get them off the street and into safe and secure housing.
- **Department of Budget Regulation:** Ensures that repurposing/reuse of existing properties is occurring in compliance with applicable fire and building codes and that relief from code requirements is being requested through the proper statutory and regulatory pathways.
- **RICoC:** The CoC is responsible for monitoring CoC recipient agencies annually and works with the Funding Committee to hold these agencies accountable to system performance standards. These are two separate processes as monitoring focuses on implementation of the program in compliance with HUD and RICoC rules and regulations, while the performance scoring process rates projects annually on how well they are performing. The CoC Planners work with the CoC Board and Funding Committee to conduct monitoring, provide system training, and support recipients in the implementation of their programs.
- **EOHHS:** Ensures that housing providers receiving state funds comply with regulations aimed at protecting the homeless population, ensuring they have access to safe and supportive housing environments. EOHHS monitors contracts to ensure that funds are being utilized within the terms and allowable uses of the funding sources and that providers are meeting deliverables as defined within the contracts.
- **RIHousing:** Ensures compliance with all state and federal requirements for the programs we administer.
- **BHDDH:** Licenses community mental health centers, some of whom have contracts with the Department of Housing for homeless services; however, are not involved in oversight of these programs.
- **Governor's Overdose Task Force:** Advisory role

Data:

- **Department of Housing:** The Department, through the Consolidated Homelessness Fund and with HRC funding, contracts for Housing Management Information System (HMIS) services. (HMIS is governed by the RI Continuum of Care). Additional homelessness-related data is collected as part of contract management.
- **HRC:** Completes an annual report, available via the RI Housing website. Recent homelessness data has focused on funding allocations of the HRC.

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- **DHS:** Integrated eligibility system captures data on living situations and documents activities with families in case notes.
- **DCYF:**
 - Certain data specifically related to families served
 - Internally track families as they enter and exit hotels.
- **RICoC:** The CoC designates the HMIS Lead in the state, which works with all ESG and CoC-funded projects. The current HMIS Lead is the Rhode Island Coalition to End Homelessness (RICEH) and is the designated agency responsible for the day-to-day operates of HMIS. This includes submitting all mandated reports to HUD on time and accurately, including the Point in Time (PIT) Count, the Housing Inventory Count (HIC), the Longitudinal System Analysis (LSA), and the System Performance Measures (SPM) report, among other responsibilities.
- **EOHHS:** Tracks data for populations served through Medicaid, and other state programs within the Ecosystem. Additional data may include HMIS and vendor reporting. EOHHS monitors contract deliverables, outcomes, and tracking the utilization of state resources allocated for housing initiatives.
- **RIHousing:** Tracks information on developments financed and clients assisted.
- **BHDDH:** BHDDH has been attempting to match its RI Behavioral Health On-line Database (RIBHOLD) with the Homeless Management Information System and has not been successful obtaining a data sharing agreement, however, the Ecosystem does match Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS) and Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data.
- **Governor's Overdose Task Force:** Advisory role

Review of Current State Statute:

Strategy/Planning:

- Department of Housing:
(§ 42-64.34-2. Powers and duties.)
 - The department of housing shall be the state's lead agency for housing, homelessness, and community development in the state of Rhode Island. To serve as the governor's chief advisor and liaison to federal policymakers on housing, homelessness, and community development as well as the principal point of contact on any such related matters; To coordinate the housing, homelessness, and community development programs of the state of Rhode Island and its departments, agencies, commissions, corporations, and subdivisions;
- Interagency Council on Homelessness
§ 40-17-3. Duties and responsibilities of council.

The duties and responsibilities of the council shall be: **(1)** To participate in the process of developing a strategic plan to end homelessness aligned with the federal strategic plan to end homelessness that will serve to reduce the number of homeless individuals and families in Rhode Island; **(2)** To coordinate services for the homeless among state agencies and instrumentalities, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, volunteer organizations, advocacy groups, and businesses; **(3)** To coordinate services not specifically for the homeless, but from which the homeless may benefit, among state agencies and instrumentalities, community-based organizations, faith-based organizations, volunteer organizations, advocacy groups, and businesses; and **(4)** To identify and seek to remedy gaps in services, specifically in the area of

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making provisions for the availability, use, and permanent funding stream for permanent supportive housing.

Programs/Financing:

- Department of Housing
(§ 42-128-2. Rhode Island housing resources agency created.)
 - There is hereby established a restricted receipt account within the general fund of the state. Funds from this account shall be used to provide for housing and homelessness initiatives including housing production, lead hazard abatement, housing rental subsidy, housing retention assistance, and homelessness services and prevention assistance with priority to veterans. Effective December 31, 2024 or after fulfillment of the reporting requirements established under §42-64.34-1(vi), whichever is later, the restricted account established under §42-128-2(3) shall be administered by the Department of Housing in consultation with the Housing Resources Commission. Funds in this account will be used in accordance with the uses established in § 42-128-2(3).
- Housing Resources Commission:
(§ 42-128-2. Rhode Island housing resources agency created.)
 - There is hereby established a restricted receipt account within the general fund of the state. Funds from this account shall be used to provide for housing and homelessness initiatives including housing production, lead hazard abatement, housing rental subsidy, housing retention assistance, and homelessness services and prevention assistance with priority to veterans. Effective December 31, 2024 or after fulfillment of the reporting requirements established under §42-64.34-1(vi), whichever is later, the restricted account established under §42-128-2(3) shall be administered by the Department of Housing in consultation with the Housing Resources Commission. Funds in this account will be used in accordance with the uses established in § 42-128-2(3).
- (§ 42-128-2.1. Housing Production Fund.)
 - In administering the housing production fund, the Rhode Island housing and mortgage finance corporation shall give priority to households either exiting homelessness or earning not more than thirty percent (30%) of area median income.
- (§ 42-128-8. Powers and duties.)
 - Administer the programs pertaining to housing resources that may be assigned by state law. The commission shall have the power and duty to administer programs for housing, housing services, and community development, including, but not limited to, programs pertaining to: Services for the homeless. The Supportive Services Program, the purpose of which is to help prevent and end homelessness among those who have experienced long-term homelessness and for whom certain services in addition to housing are essential. State funding for this program may leverage other resources for the purpose of providing supportive services. Services provided pursuant to this subsection may include, but not be limited to: assistance with budgeting and paying rent; access to employment; encouraging tenant involvement in facility management and policies; medication monitoring and management; daily living skills related to food, housekeeping, and

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socialization; counseling to support self-identified goals; referrals to mainstream health, mental health, and treatment programs; and conflict resolution.

- RI Housing:
(§ 42-55-22.3. Emergency housing assistance.)
 - The department of human services shall administer the emergency housing assistance program in accordance with the Rhode Island housing and mortgage finance corporation rules and regulations and contracts with community action program agencies, as those rules and regulations may be currently in force and effect. In so far as the board of directors may authorize funds for the support of this program, the receipt of those funds shall be deposited as general revenues and appropriated to the department of human services for the support of the program.

Review of Prior Report Findings:

Current system opportunities/gaps:

Boston Consulting Group and The Rhode Island Foundation 2023 Report:

- There is a deficit of project-based permanent supportive housing (PSH) units in Rhode Island, driven in large part by a deficit of units
- Several State Licensed Facilities have expressed willingness to provide space to accommodate homeless individuals
- There are not enough shelter options and supportive services for individuals with substance use disorder (SUD)
- It is difficult to track every individual who has been identified as unsheltered over time and across providers
- There is little incentive for developers to prioritize individuals who are experiencing homelessness; much of the burden of developing a tenant selection plan falls on developers
- Based on state benchmarking the following are potential functions of a state housing department related to homelessness
 - Set strategy to end homelessness
 - Solicit input from community stakeholders
 - Enforce availability of permanent housing options for homeless individuals
 - Apply for and manage:
 - Continuum of Care Program
 - Emergency Solutions Grants
 - Fund emergency shelters
 - Fund permanent housing for adults experiencing homelessness
 - Coordinate use of emergency shelters
 - Coordinate wraparound services
 - Collect and analyze data (e.g., number of homeless, effectiveness of programs, etc.,)
 - Coordinate collection across homeless and housing service providers (HMIS)

Summary of Stakeholder Input:

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Current system opportunities/gaps:

Governance and Coordination

- The current structure, where RIHousing receives a substantial portion of RI Continuum of Care (RiCoC) program funds while also playing an administrative role, creates potential governance complexities.
- The current organizational structure between RIHousing, RiCoC, and HRC is unclear and has some administrative and authority challenges, presenting an opportunity to realign authority and administrative processes for improved governance.
- There are potential redundancies among EOHHS agencies (DOC, BHDDH, DHS) in addressing homeless populations, which poses an opportunity to further streamline and optimize processes and structures.
- Improve coordination between state agencies, municipalities, and community partners on homelessness policy and programs through establishing a functional Interagency Council on Homelessness. This will help the Department of Housing and the RiCoC leverage resources/funding to serve households experiencing homelessness outside of the Consolidated Homeless Fund and CoC resources.
- Continue to utilize the Funding Committee to work on strategy and inform funding decisions of the both the CoC and Consolidated Homeless Fund/HRC will ensure that the two main funding streams of the homeless response system are aligned and not duplicating services.
- Coordinate planning processes, so that RiCoC's strategic plan and the current strategies for ending homelessness in Rhode Island both inform and are informed by the state's housing plan.
- The Continuum of Care and CES has developed into a highly bureaucratic system which is not nimble or flexible enough to meet the current demand.
- The main gap in the current homeless response system is the higher-level coordination efforts necessary to leverage systems outside of CoC and CHF funding to end homelessness in Rhode Island. The current homeless response system is set up to house those who are most vulnerable, and with a scarcity of resources, this means that often as households are entering our system, there is no other options outside of the limited shelter resources. One key component of a successful strategy to end homelessness is to focus significant time and effort on inflow into the homeless response system. This requires coordination with other systems that are engaged with households entering homelessness (DOC, DCYF, BHDDH, etc.). A quarterly meeting of state department directors and implementation staff focused on issues of homelessness, would help the RiCoC and homeless response system effectively coordinate to decrease inflow via more effective discharge planning or diversion programs (for example, this could be the Interagency Council on Homelessness), while also working to increase housing supply and supportive services.

Service Delivery and Partnerships:

- Centralized Intake and Assessment Processes:
 - Opportunity: Centralizing intake for housing and homelessness services would streamline eligibility assessments and reduce the need for clients to complete

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- multiple applications across agencies. A centralized system would also allow for faster referrals to the most appropriate resources.
- Action Steps: Implement a coordinated entry system that allows clients to access a single entry point for housing and homelessness services. This could be accomplished by partnering with local non-profits and other agencies to create a standardized assessment tool and a shared case management platform.
 - Expanding Outreach and Early Intervention Programs
 - Opportunity: Investing in proactive outreach and early intervention programs can prevent individuals and families from falling into homelessness and reduce the demand for emergency housing services.
 - Action Steps: Develop an outreach team or partner with community organizations to identify and support individuals at risk of eviction or homelessness. This could include expanding case management services, offering tenant counseling, and providing short-term financial assistance to stabilize at-risk households.
 - Strengthening Partnerships with Community-Based Organizations
 - Opportunity: Many local organizations provide essential housing and homelessness services. By formalizing partnerships and improving coordination with these organizations, can maximize resource allocation, minimize duplication, and streamline service delivery.
 - Action Steps: Establish formal memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with community action agencies, shelters, and other housing organizations to outline roles and responsibilities. Regular coordination meetings and joint training sessions would enhance communication, foster collaboration, and ensure that clients receive the most appropriate services.
 - Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Rehousing Services
 - Gap: While emergency shelter services are available, there is a lack of comprehensive homelessness prevention programs that intervene before individuals or families lose their homes. Additionally, rapid rehousing services that assist people in quickly transitioning back into permanent housing after a crisis are limited.
 - Function Needed: A dedicated homelessness prevention program focused on providing rental assistance, mediation services, and case management support would help prevent evictions and keep individuals stably housed. Expanded rapid rehousing services with wraparound support, such as rental subsidies and job placement assistance, are also essential.

Data Collection and Evaluation

- Gap: Data collection capabilities are limited by the current technology infrastructure, which restricts the ability to fully understand trends, assess service needs, and evaluate program impact across the housing and homelessness system.
- Function Needed: An enhanced data management system that integrates data from multiple sources (such as homelessness shelters, healthcare providers, and local housing authorities) is needed to provide a comprehensive view of the housing crisis. This system would support real-time data sharing, track outcomes, and facilitate data-driven decision-making.

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Specialized Populations:

- Lack of affordable housing options: Families are struggling to access stable, affordable housing, which directly impacts their ability to maintain family unity and stability.
- Insufficient concrete supports for housing-insecure families: There is a significant need for increased resources and services specifically designed to help families secure and sustain housing.
- Limited shelter availability: The scarcity of emergency shelters leaves families with few options during times of crisis.
- Inadequate transitional housing: There is a need for more investments in transitional housing programs to provide stability for families as they work toward long-term housing solutions.
- Underinvestment in support services: Families experiencing housing insecurity are not receiving the level of support they need, including case management, financial assistance, and mental health services, all of which are crucial for long-term stability.
- Creating emergency housing opportunities in a manner that is flexible based on real time needs, especially for families. Regionally based housing navigation/support teams that can work closely with individuals and families with acute housing needs to move them quickly to shelter or other housing options.

Resources and Capacity

- Lack of capacity: There is not enough capacity among homeless providers to manage the increasing number of homeless families and individuals and guide them through the coordinated entry system. In addition, there is not enough emergency or transitional housing available to accommodate immediate shelter needs.

Appendix B: Landscape Analysis Sources

Rhode Island: Existing Housing Statutes

Statute #	Title and Link
R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-11-10	<u>Department of Administration: Statewide Planning Program</u>
R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-55	<u>Rhode Island Housing and Mortgage Finance Corporation</u>
R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-64.19-3	<u>Executive Office of Commerce</u>
R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-64.34	<u>The Department of Housing</u>
R.I. Gen. Laws § 42-128	<u>Rhode Island Housing Resources Act of 1998</u>

Prior Housing Reports

Date Published	Report Title and Link
November 2022	<u>Department of Housing: Housing Organizational Plan</u>
December 2022	<u>HousingWorks RI: Visualizing Rhode Island’s Housing Ecosystem</u>
April 2023	<u>Rhode Island Foundation: Housing Supply and Homelessness in Rhode Island</u>
December 2023	<u>Rhode Island 2023 Integrated Housing Report</u>
September 2024	<u>Rhode Island: Housing 2030 Advisory Group Meeting</u>

Survey of State Departments, Quasi-Public Agencies, Commissions, and Boards (36 Organizational Responses)

Entity Name
Coastal Resources Management Council
Department of Administration
Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Development Disabilities, and Hospitals
Department of Business Regulation
Department of Children, Youth, and Families
Department of Environmental Management
Department of Housing
Department of Human Services
Department of Public Safety, Public Safety Grant Admission Office
Division of Public Utilities and Carriers
Economic Development Planning Council
Executive Office of Commerce and RI Commerce Corporation
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Governor’s Commission on Aging
Governor’s Overdose Task Force
Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission
HRC Coordinating Commission
Housing Resources Commission
I-195 Redevelopment District
Office of Healthy Aging
Office of Post-Secondary Commissioner

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Office of the Child Advocate
Opioid Settlement Committee
Public Finance Management Board
Quonset Development Corporation
RI Commerce Corporation
RI Continuum of Care
RI Department of Health
RI Department of Training and Labor
RI Development Disabilities Council
RI Emergency Management Agency
Ri Executive Climate Change Coordinating Council
RI Infrastructure Bank
RI Public Transit Authority
RI Public Utilities Commission
RIHousing

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