Housing Governance Report

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Housing Organization Options for Consideration and Discussion

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The FY25 Enacted Budget included a new reporting requirement for the Department of Housing. This report – due December 31, 2024 – will review and recommend options for housing governance.

Statutory Language

"On or before December 31, 2024 develop 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."

Phase 3 – Development of Options

Summary of Report Process & Current Phase

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	*The draft Phase 1 and 2 Report is available here: https://housing.ri.gov/data-reports/housing-governance-report-2024*		• National best practices • Proposed options from prior reports • Stakeholder input • Input from departments, quasi-publics, commissions, and boards	• Stakeholder input • Discussions with departments, quasi-publics, commissions, and boards

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Framework for Options

There are three basic "flavors" of what governance options might entail. There could be more than one option in each of the categories, or blends across categories. These can be summarized as:

Coordinated	Consolidated	Created
Coordinate functions/responsibilities across existing organizations	Consolidate functions/responsibilities into existing organizations	Creation of a new organization

Phase 2: Opportunity Criteria

Phase 2 identified the following opportunities to address major challenges identified in the landscape analysis.

- **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.

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Assessment of Governance Model Types

A **Coordinated** model is **Somewhat Responsive** to opportunities; a **Consolidated** model is **Highly Responsive.**

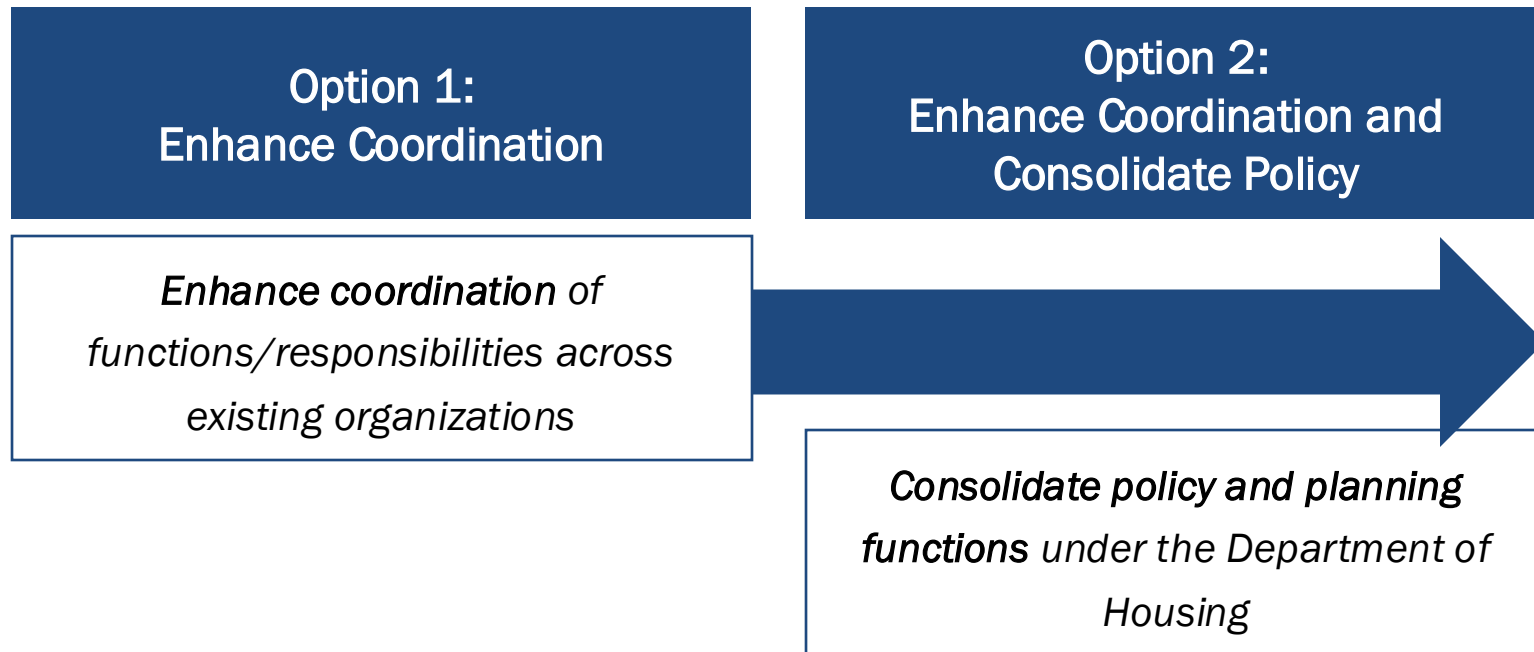| Opportunity Criteria	Coordinated *Coordinate functions/responsibilities across existing organizations*	Consolidated *Consolidate functions/responsibilities into existing organizations*	Created *Creation of a new organization*
Ensuring role clarity	✓ Clarifies, but does not reduce duplication/complexity in the system	✓+ Centralizes authority and resources, reducing duplication and complexity	- Risks more fragmentation/dispersion of roles and responsibilities
Being proactive, not reactive	✓ Aligns, but retains duplication in strategic planning roles and fragmentation in data collection	✓+ Centralizes responsibility for planning, evaluation, and data collection	- Risks more duplication/ fragmentation in planning, evaluation, and data collection
Maximizing resources and streamlining operations	✓ Aligns, but does not streamline operations and financing	✓+ Streamlines operations and maximizes resources	- Risks exacerbating resource gaps in staffing/funding
Ensuring transparency and accountability	✓ Aligns, but retains distributed decision-making and accountability	✓+ Streamlines decision-making processes and clarifies accountability	- Risks further distributing decision-making and accountability
	Somewhat Responsive	**Highly Responsive**	**Limited Responsiveness**

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Range of Coordination and Consolidation Options

Within the coordination and consolidation model types, there is a spectrum of options.

Option 1:
Enhance Coordination

Option 2:
Enhance Coordination and Consolidate Policy

Enhance coordination of functions/responsibilities across existing organizations

Consolidate policy and planning functions under the Department of Housing

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Any change in governance requires thoughtful change management.

Notes on transition

- The options being discussed should be considered a possible 'end state' for housing governance.

- Moving from current status to any potential option would require focused and thoughtful attention, and should be managed over a period of time to ensure continuity of operations.

- After the governance plan is adopted, a more detailed transition plan should be developed that speaks to the timeline and process for any such changes.

Current Model

As documented in the Phase 1 and 2 report, 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.

Current State

Legend:
— Existing formal relationship
···· Ad-hoc coordination
▢ Active
▢ Inactive

Department of Housing

RIHousing

Housing Resources Commission

RI Continuum of Care (CoC)

HR Coordinating Committee

Interagency Council on Homelessness
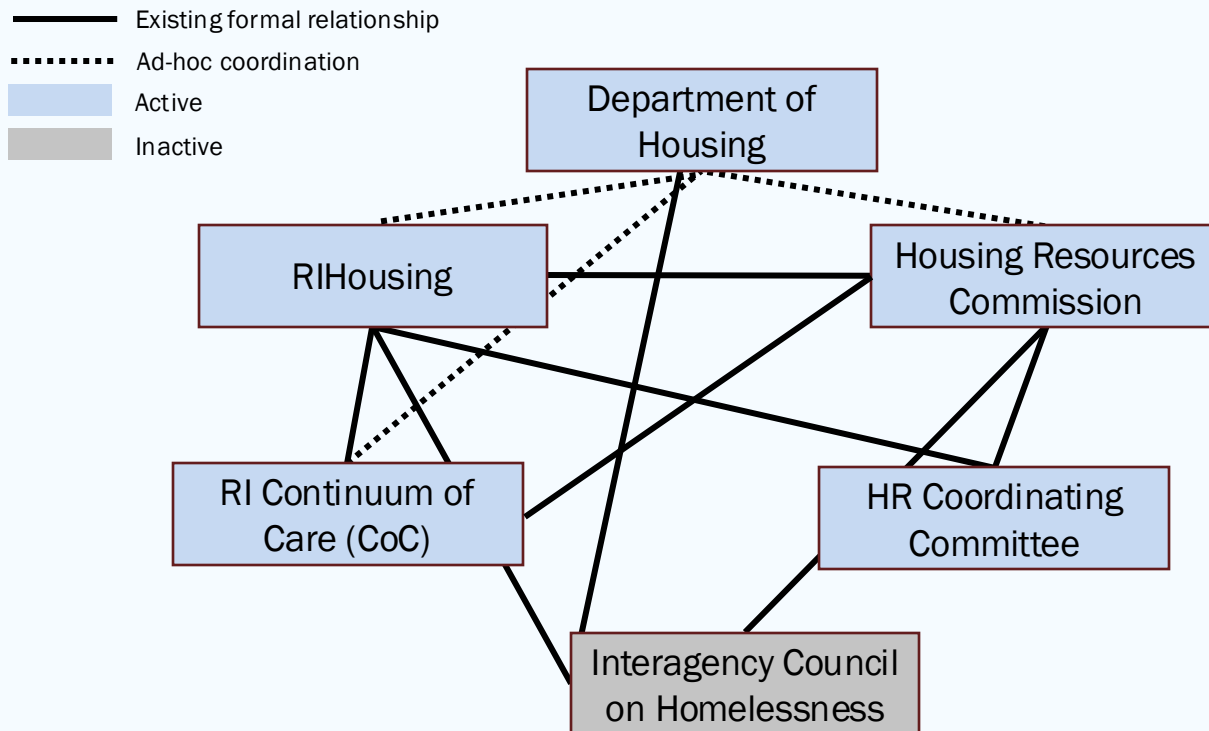
Phase 2 Opportunity Criteria

Options development is responsive to the following opportunities:

- **Ensuring role clarity:** Reduce complexity for system users and establish clear roles, responsibilities, and relationships among housing and homelessness entities.

- **Being proactive, not reactive:** Boost proactive and coordinated planning, program evaluation, innovation, and data activities.

- **Maximizing resources and streamlining operations:** Ensure alignment in budgets, financing, and programs and state entities' work on housing and homelessness.

- **Ensuring transparency and accountability:** Clarify and streamline processes and systems for decision-making.

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Core Housing Entities

A wide array of state departments, quasi-public agencies, boards, and commissions are involved in housing functions in the state, as documented in the Landscape Analysis. Focusing on the core housing entities:
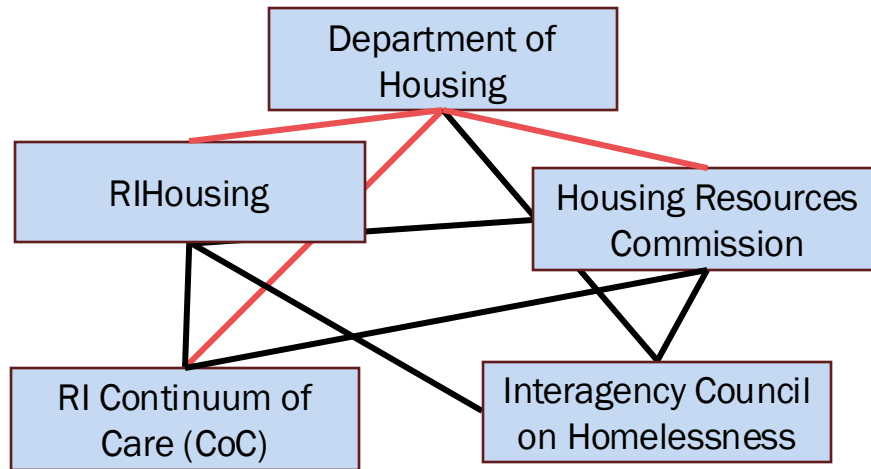
Options focus on the following key housing entities at the core of RI's executive branch housing governance model.

Entity	Type of Entity	Best Positioned to:
Department of Housing	State Agency	• Lead housing and homelessness policy development and strategic planning • Coordinate cross-agency and cross-entity housing initiatives • Ensure policy alignment and accountability across entities • Submit state budget requests, which inform the Governor's annual budget proposal
Housing Resources Commission (HRC)	Cross-sector Commission established by statute	• Advise the State on housing and homelessness planning from a range of perspectives, especially non-governmental perspectives • Assemble relevant stakeholders to address emerging or priority needs
Housing Resources Coordinating Committee (HRCC)	Committee established by statute	• Unclear purpose at this time (duplicative with Department)
RIHousing	Quasi-Public Agency	• Manage and monitor financing for housing development, preservation, and homeownership in a nimble manner • Engage directly with clients/customers
RI Continuum of Care (CoC)	Federally defined entity	• Fulfill federal requirements for CoCs, including operate the CoC, designate HMIS, and conduct CoC planning
Interagency Council on Homelessness	Council established by statute	• Advise on policy development and strategic planning to address homelessness across agencies • Facilitate interagency collaboration to prevent homelessness • Tier 2 group: provide advisory recommendations to the Interagency Council on homelessness needs and policy

Straw Options for Discussion

Option 1:
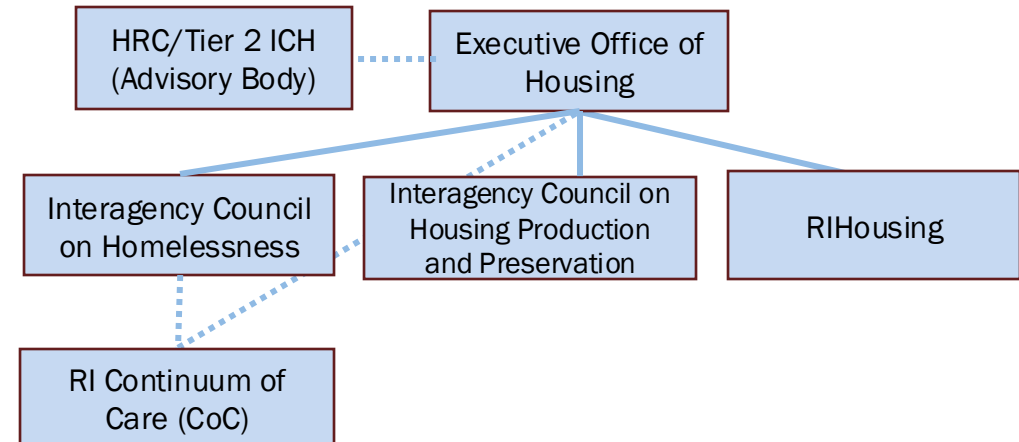**Enhance Coordination**

Clarify roles and formalize the relationship between the Department and other key entities, eliminate the HRCC, streamline duplicative planning functions

- Department of Housing
- RIHousing
- Housing Resources Commission
- RI Continuum of Care (CoC)
- Interagency Council on Homelessness

Existing formal relationship
New formal relationship

Option 2:
Enhance Coordination and Consolidate Policy and Funding

Centralize policy, strategic planning functions, and funding with the Department of Housing, with direct leadership connections to HFA board and councils

- HRC/Tier 2 ICH (Advisory Body)
- Executive Office of Housing
- Interagency Council on Homelessness
- Interagency Council on Housing Production and Preservation
- RIHousing
- RI Continuum of Care (CoC)

Direct leadership relationship (i.e. Chair of board or council)
Advisory or coordination relationship

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Straw Option Details

	Option 1: Enhance Coordination	Option 2: Enhance Coordination and Consolidate Policy and Financing
Department of Housing (HSG)	• Align responsibility and authority for strategic planning and policy development within the Department of Housing, advised by the Housing Resources Commission and Interagency Council on Homelessness. For example, this would include responsibility for conducting the Consolidated Plan, developing the state housing guide plan element, and strategic plan to end homelessness. • Align responsibility and authority for state financing for housing and homelessness within the Dept. This would include moving Housing Production Fund to the Dept. • Dept becomes a statutory member of the RIHousing Board. • Dept is added as a statutory member of the HRC, staffs the HRC, and is advised by the HRC. • Dept chairs and staffs the Interagency Council on Homelessness. ICH policy and planning responsibilities move to the Dept, and support execution of homelessness strategy.	• Department becomes an "Executive Office of Housing" with coordination of other agencies required by statute. Secretary chairs the Interagency Council on Homelessness and a new Interagency Council on Housing Production and Preservation. The Secretary of Housing has a leadership role at RI Housing, as chair of the board. • Align responsibility and authority for strategic planning and policy development within the Department of Housing, advised by the Housing Resources Commission. For example, this would include responsibility for conducting the Consolidated Plan, developing the state housing guide plan element, and strategic plan to end homelessness. • Align responsibility and authority for state financing for housing and homelessness within the Dept. This would include moving Housing Production Fund to the Dept. • The Department and RIHousing will determine which federal housing programs should be transitioned to the Department. • The HRC and the Tier 2 Interagency Council on Homelessness are consolidated to become an overarching Governor's Council on Housing and Homelessness. Membership is updated and focused on community partners, impacted communities, experts, and advocates. Dept provides administrative support.
Housing Resources Commission (HRC)	• HRC becomes the core advisory body for housing to the State (i.e. a Governor's Council on Housing) and can assemble relevant stakeholders to address emerging or priority needs • HRC direct management responsibilities are moved to executive branch agencies that have staff capacity. For example, lead mitigation moves to RIDOH.	• The HRC and the Tier 2 Interagency Council on Homelessness are consolidated to become an overarching Governor's Council on Housing and Homelessness. Membership is updated and focused on community partners, impacted communities, experts, and advocates. Dept provides administrative support. • HRC direct management responsibilities are moved to executive branch agencies that have staff capacity. For example, lead mitigation moves to RIDOH.
HRCC	• The HR Coordinating Committee is eliminated; the Dept. takes over responsibility for interagency coordination and for Housing Production Fund (HPF)	
RIHousing	• Dept becomes a statutory member of the RIHousing Board. • Dept is responsible for development of future Consolidated Plans.	• The Secretary of Housing has a leadership role at RIHousing, as chair of the board. • The Department and RIHousing will determine which federal housing programs should be transitioned to the Department. • Dept is responsible for development of future Consolidated Plans.
RI Continuum of Care (CoC)	• Enhance current federally required coordination activities through an MOU stating roles, responsibilities, and collaboration across Dept, CoC, and ICH, including formalizing the Funding Committee	• At next federal cycle, recommend that the RICoC consider naming the Dept as the collaborative applicant to further consolidate and allow for enhanced coordination. • Recommend that RICoC consider engaging the ICH as the body to ratify RICoC funding decisions, to ensure alignment with interagency funding
Interagency Council on Homelessness	• Dept chairs and staffs the Interagency Council on Homelessness. ICH policy and planning responsibilities move to the Dept, and support execution of homelessness strategy.	• Dept chairs and staffs the Interagency Council on Homelessness. ICH policy and planning responsibilities move to the Dept, and support execution of homelessness strategy. • The HRC and the Tier 2 Interagency Council on Homelessness are consolidated to become an overarching Governor's Council on Housing and Homelessness. Membership is updated and focused on community partners, impacted communities, experts, and advocates. Dept provides administrative support.

Discussion

- Benefits and considerations of each option

- Other considerations not currently reflected