



Housing Governance Report

Landscape Analysis, Criteria, and
Next Steps

**RHODE
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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.”

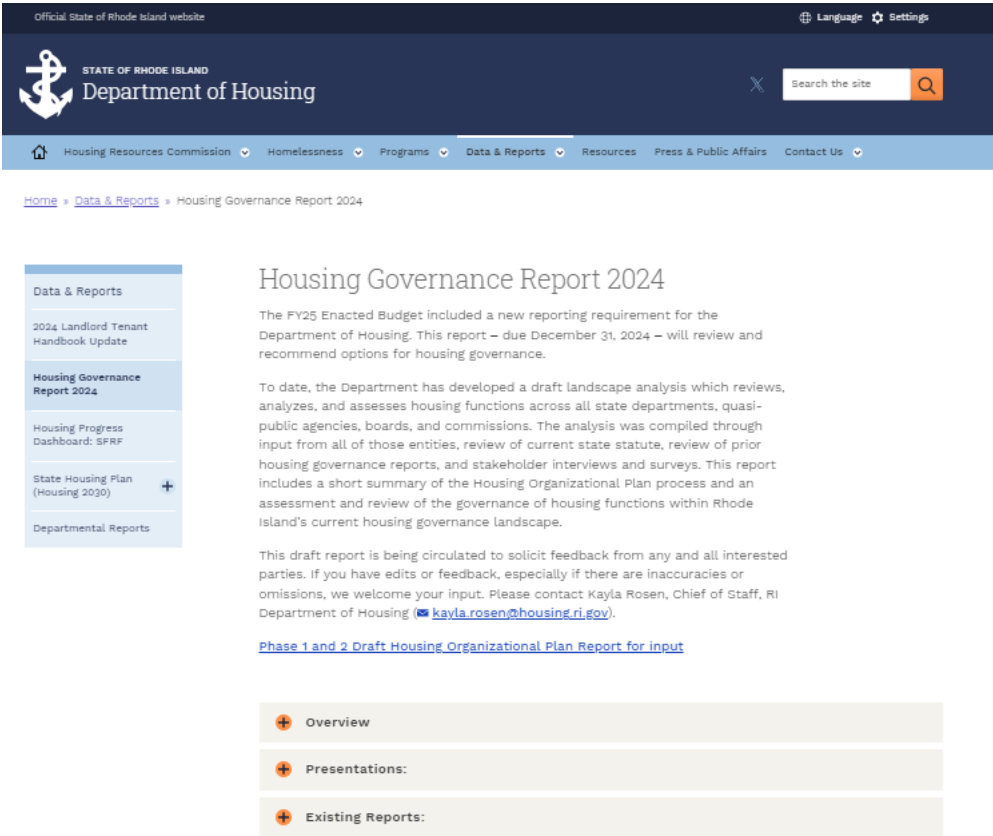
Process Overview

Summary of Report Process



Draft landscape analysis is posted on the website for input and feedback!

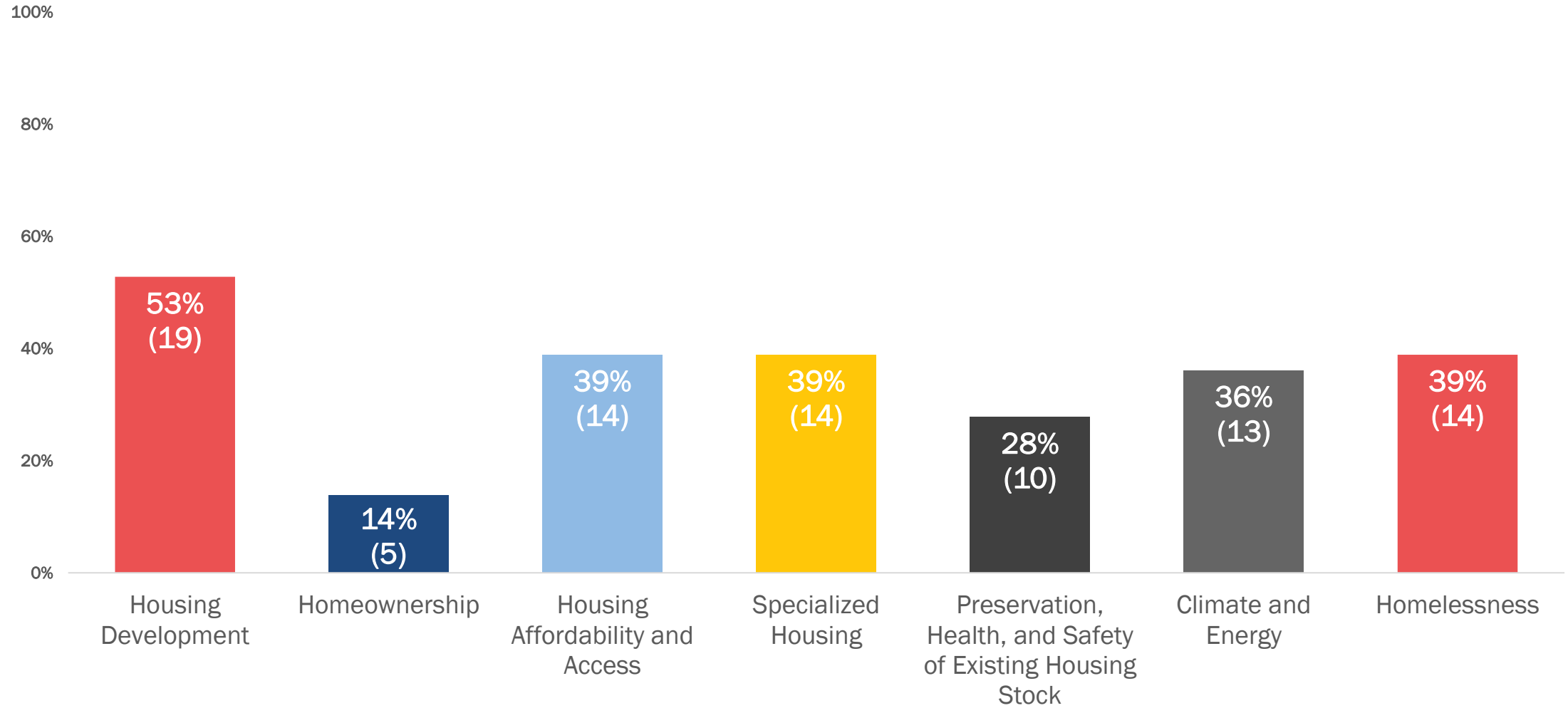
The interim, draft report was produced by the Department of Housing with support from Faulkner Consulting Group pursuant to Rhode Island’s Housing Organizational Plan statutory charge. This report includes a short summary of the Housing Organizational Plan process and an assessment and review of the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



Landscape analysis inputs

- **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.

Entitites Reporting Role in Housing Policy Area
(2024 Organizational Survey, 36 Respondents)
See Appendix B for full list of respondents



Review, analysis, and assessment of functions

Policy Areas

- 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.

Emerging Analysis – Overview

For Input and Discussion

- **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
- **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.
- **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.

Emerging analysis, cont.

- **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.
- **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.
- **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.

Phase 2: Opportunity Criteria – Draft

- **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.

Feedback and input welcome!

- Please email me at kayla.rosen@housing.ri.gov with ideas or comments, ideally by November 22.

Looking ahead to Phase 3 – Development of Options

Summary of Report Process



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. These can be summarized as:

Coordinated

Coordinate
functions/responsibilities
across existing organizations

Consolidated

Consolidate
functions/responsibilities into
existing organizations

Created

Creation of a new organization

High-level timeline

- **Week of December 2:** Draft options for consideration for input/discussion
 - Posted online for feedback and review
 - Workshop session on Zoom - to be scheduled
- **Week of December 16:** Collect all final feedback and revise
- **December 31:** Final report submission



Thank you!

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