

RI Executive Office of Housing
Housing Champion Designation Program

September 2026

1.1 Purpose:

- A. The purpose of these guidelines is to govern the Housing Champions Program (“Program”) established in Chapter 42-167-10 of the Rhode Island General Laws. The primary purpose of the Program is to incentivize municipalities to take actions that support housing development and help achieve the State’s housing goals as outlined in *Housing 2030*, the State Guide Plan element for housing, or its successor document(s). Participation in this program is voluntary, and each municipality shall have the option at its sole discretion to apply for the Housing Champion (“HC”) designation. These guidelines establish procedures and conditions for the Executive Office of Housing’s (“EOH”) operation of the Program.
- B. EOH will designate qualifying municipalities as Housing Champions in response to applications in accordance with criteria established in statute and the scoring system detailed in this document.
- C. There are no funds directly associated with the Program and receipt of the HC designation does not guarantee funding. However, upon receipt of the HC designation, for the term(s) for which the designation remains valid, municipalities shall receive preferential access to the discretionary state resources listed in Sec. 1.4.5 of this document as available.

1.2 Application and Authority:

The terms and provisions of these guidelines shall be liberally construed to permit EOH to effectuate the purposes of state law.

1.3 Applications and Application Process

1.3.1 Submission of Applications

EOH will create and provide on its website an application for HC status. EOH will open applications on a rolling basis for HC status to all Rhode Island municipalities. Instructions for submission will be provided on the EOH website. Applications must be submitted to EOH in the manner provided in the instructions.

1.3.2 Review of Applications

- A. A Program review committee of EOH staff shall be appointed by the Secretary of Housing and shall review all complete applications received.
- B. All applications for HC designation shall be submitted in a form acceptable to EOH as prescribed on the EOH website.
- C. Staff will review applications and will determine eligibility and conformance with the threshold requirements. Any application determined not to meet the threshold requirements enumerated in Sec. 1.3.3 of this document will be eliminated from consideration and will not be scored.
- D. Applications meeting the threshold requirements shall further be considered in accordance with the scoring system established herein to promote the goals and requirements of RIGL 42-167-10. Only applicants that receive at least the minimum required score from the review committee shall be granted the HC designation.

1.3.3 Threshold Requirements

All applications for the HC designation must meet the following criteria to be scored by the review committee:

- A. The Comprehensive Plan of the applicant municipality must either be in conformance with RIGL 45-22.2, or the municipality must demonstrate to the satisfaction of EOH staff that they have contracted a consultant or have publicly posted an RFP for a consultant to bring the comprehensive plan into conformance within a reasonable timeframe, or in the circumstance where the municipality is not engaging a consultant, the municipality must provide evidence that the comprehensive plan rewrite/update is actively in progress and there is a reasonable timeframe to complete the plan.
- B. The applicant municipality has submitted all statutorily required data and reports to EOH, and utilizes the Statewide Permitting Initiative (e-permitting). This includes but is not limited to data for the Accessory Dwelling Unit Report, the LMIH Comprehensive Permit Report, the Fee-in-Lieu and Public Housing Authority Report, the Integrated Housing Report, and the Vacant Schools Report.

- C. The applicant's zoning and land use regulations are in compliance with state law or can clearly demonstrate that they are actively in the process of bringing their zoning and land use regulations into compliance with state law.
- D. The applicant has not taken any action that EOH reasonably determines to be contrary to the purpose or intent of the Program such as refusing to apply new state mandated zoning and land use requirements or taking actions that directly undermine the same.

1.3.4 Scoring System

Applications for the HC designation shall be evaluated by the review committee in accordance with the scoring system detailed below. Only applications that receive the minimum required score of seventy-five (75) out of a possible 100 total points from the review committee shall be granted the HC designation.

- A. (50 points) Adoption of land use regulations and ordinances.
The review committee shall award up to fifty (50) points for the adoption of land use policies, regulations, and ordinances to promote the development of housing consistent with the State Guide Plan element and other types of housing necessary for the economic development of the state. The application for HC designation shall instruct applicants to provide supporting materials demonstrating that such policies, regulations, and ordinances have been adopted.
- B. (15 points) Adoption of pro-housing Comprehensive Plans
The review committee shall award up to fifteen (15) points for the adoption of Comprehensive Plans consistent with the State Guide Plan element for housing and which promote increased housing production. Municipalities shall be instructed in the application materials to include examples and descriptions of any such pro-housing elements of their Comprehensive Plans.
- C. (10 points) Training of planning and zoning board members.
The review committee shall award up to ten (10) points for using training materials and programs provided by EOH that cover the processes, procedures, regulations, and statutes related to the board on which the member serves. Such training materials and programs shall be determined by EOH and posted to the EOH website.

D. (15 points) Infrastructure improvements.

The review committee shall award up to fifteen (15) points for planning or implementation of sewer and water infrastructure improvements and/or electric infrastructure improvements intended to support the development of housing consistent with the State Guide Plan housing element.

E. (10 points) Transportation Accessibility.

The review committee shall award up to ten (10) points for planning or implementation of safe transportation systems between housing, jobs and other needs, whether by walking, biking or public transportation.

F. BONUS: (15 points) Adoption of financial tools to incentivize the development of housing and other pro-housing efforts.

The review committee shall award up to fifteen (15) bonus points for the adoption of financial tools that incentivize the development of housing and other pro-housing policies, funding programs, and/or initiatives not otherwise included in this section. Applicants shall be instructed to include examples and descriptions of any such pro-housing efforts in their application submissions.

1.4 Program administration

EOH, at its sole discretion shall administer the HC program.

1.4.1 Term of designation

In accordance with RIGL 42-167-10(f), once a municipality has been granted the HC designation, it shall be valid for a period of three (3) years from the date such designation is awarded by EOH.

1.4.2 Removal of HC designation during term

Notwithstanding any of the above, EOH retains the right to remove the HC designation from a municipality prior to the end of the three (3) year period in the event that EOH determines:

- A. That the municipality has failed to meet the reporting requirements enumerated in section 1.3.3.B or 1.4.4 of this document; or
- B. That the municipality has repealed, reversed, failed to enforce, or otherwise did not effectuate the ordinances and/or policies enumerated in the municipality's application for the HC designation.
- C. That the municipality has taken actions that EOH determines to be contrary to the intent of the Program.

In the event such a determination is made, EOH will notify the municipality in writing. Such notification shall include instructions for remedying the situation. The HC designation shall not be automatically removed upon determination of the above and EOH shall offer a grace period of thirty (30) days in which the municipality can respond to the determination and/or take action to remedy the determination. Municipalities that meet the requirements to the satisfaction of EOH during such a grace period shall not have the HC designation removed. Loss of the HC designation shall not prevent a municipality from reapplying for the HC designation.

1.4.3 Renewal of designation

The HC designation may be renewed for subsequent three (3) year periods. Municipalities that wish to renew the designation may apply for renewal through an application provided on the EOH website. The EOH website shall include instructions and requirements for renewal application, which may differ from those of an initial application. Only applications for renewal deemed complete by EOH shall be reviewed.

1.4.4 Reporting requirements

Municipalities that receive the HC designation shall annually report to EOH the following in a manner prescribed by EOH no later than September 1 of each year:

- A. An assessment of the overall impact of the HC designation program, including an assessment of additional housing units produced in the municipality as a result of the program's operation and incentives.
- B. Information on municipal funding mechanisms created or utilized to support the production and/or preservation of housing since receiving the HC designation.

1.4.5 Benefits of HC designation

In accordance with RIGL 42-167-10(b), municipalities designated as Housing Champions will receive preferential access to state resources as available. This shall be effectuated by granting bonus points equal to the ten percent (10%) of the total available points in the scoring of applications for the following municipal grant programs offered by the State of Rhode Island:

Agency	Program(s)
Executive Office of Housing	Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)
Executive Office of Commerce	• Main Street Rhode Island Streetscape Improvement Fund

	• Site Readiness Program • Placemaking Initiative
Department of Environmental Management	• Local Open Space Grants • Outdoor Recreation Grants • Brownfield Remediation and Economic Development program • Recreational Trails Program
RI Infrastructure Bank	Community Project Assistance Fund

1.5 Modifications

Where deemed appropriate by EOH, variation of any provisions herein may be made or additional requirements may be added.

1.6 Severability

If any provision of this document or the application thereof is held invalid by a court of competent jurisdiction, the remainder of this document shall not be affected thereby. The invalidity of any section or sections or parts of any section or sections shall not affect the validity of the remainder of this document.