



### Overview / Summary

Regional Housing Services are multi-jurisdictional efforts are a collaborative approach to provide expertise, skills and staffing capacity for a variety of tasks related to certifying, tracking and promoting housing to more than one jurisdiction. There are three (3) such collaborations in Massachusetts:

- *Regional Housing Services Office* - serving Acton, Bedford, Burlington, Concord, Lexington, Sudbury, Wayland and Weston.
- *Metro West Regional Housing Consultant* (serving Hudson, Hudson Affordable Housing Trust, Stow, Boxborough, Bolton, Littleton and Devens Enterprise Commission / MassDevelopment)
- *Metro North RHSO* (serving Reading, North Reading, Saugus and Wilmington)

### History

There was a gap in expertise, and staff capacity for many Towns in eastern Massachusetts that are required to keep up to date on housing related administrative and tracking responsibilities. To address this need, in 2011 the **Metropolitan Area Planning Council** (MAPC) conducted a study of possible services that a regional housing office might provide, assisting with the formation of the first regional group. The Regional Housing Services Office was formed through an **Inter Municipal Agreement** (IMA) by 6 communities generally along Route 128 west of Boston. Sudbury was the initial lead community, establishing a Revolving Fund through Town Meeting. The town of Concord is now the lead community for that RHSO. In or around 2013, several communities along and near Route 495 issued an RFP for Regional Housing Consultant (RHC) services and chose Metro West Collaborative Development Inc. to serve as the MetroWest RHC. The town of Hudson is the lead community for that collaboration. In 2018, four communities north of Boston created the Metro North RHSO, with the town of Reading taking the lead. Many of these towns use **Community Preservation Act** (CPA) funding to pay their share of these services, and some use other funding sources.

The entities that participate in these regional housing service organizations agree to share costs and expenses. Table 1 below summarizes some of the key features of their agreements. Copies of the most recent IMAs are listed at the end of this summary and available on the Housing Choice web pages.



## Regional Housing Services

**Table 1. Summary of Regional Housing Services providers**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Fee Structure</b>	<b>IMA / Contract Term</b>	<b>Scope of Services</b>
<b>RHSO Concord</b> Acton Bedford Burlington Concord Lexington Sudbury Wayland* Weston	Based on estimated hours (FY 18 range of 155 hours to 830 hours) based on past experience and understanding of anticipated projects 2018 contract: \$212,069 for 2,980 hours *Wayland has a separate contract for services	IMA: 3-year term, option to renew for additional 3-year terms Contract: Annual	Monitoring SHI Administration HOME Program administration Local Support Regional Activities Shared Website – RHSOhousing.org
<b>Metro West RHC</b> Bolton Boxborough Devens Enterprise Commission Hudson/Hudson AHT Littleton Stow	Combination of hours for local services, plus regional activities and monitoring. 2017 annual contract: \$30,240 for 432 hours	IMA: 3 years Contract: 1 year with 2 one year renewal options	Local Support Monitoring Regional Services
<b>Metro North RHSO</b> North Reading Reading Saugus Wilmington	Specific percentage of salary and expenses from estimated time that will be spent in each community FY 2019 contract: \$62,830 FY 2020 estimate: \$64,715	IMA: 2-year term (option to renew 6 times in 2-year increments) Contract: none -- Town of Reading staff provides services	Monitoring SHI administration Local Support Regional activities

The IMAs address a variety of issues related to the provision of regional housing services:

- Specific scope of services for the service provider
- Duties of the lead agency
- Funding details/Membership fee structure
- Allocation of hours, ability to make adjustments (within the billing year and in subsequent years)
- Ability to contract for supplemental services
- Voting on new member Towns/Cities
- Withdrawal
- Advisory / Interagency Committee Oversight



### **Three Different Staffing Approaches**

Each of these regional housing service providers has a different management and staffing approach. The Concord-based RHSO is staffed by four independent contractors who each contract with the Town of Concord on an annual basis. In the first iteration of this RHSO, the Town of Sudbury was the lead agency and provided staff services, however that model has evolved to using independent contractors. For the Concord-based RHSO, the Town of Concord provides office space, IT/Website hosting and contracting. The FY19 billing rate is \$69/hour.

Metro West Collaborative Development Inc. is a non-profit Community Development Corporation (CDC) that develops and administers affordable housing projects. They were selected as the contractor for the Metro West RHC in 2013 and again in 2017. They operate as a contractor, wherein the lead Town of Hudson is the contractor and fiscal agent, but it does not provide office space to the RHC. The billing rate is \$70/hour.

The Town of Reading is the lead for the Metro North RHSO. The Town hired a Housing Coordinator who is a Town employee who provides housing services in accordance with that IMA.

### **Other Regional Housing Providers**

In Franklin County, the Franklin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA), authorized by the legislature in 1973, has all the powers and authority of a local housing authority and redevelopment authority for all 26 communities in Franklin County. They provide an array of housing and community development services to local governments, although not the types of services outlined in Table 1 above. For example, Franklin County HRA administers Community Development Block Grants (CDBG), manages affordable rental housing across the County, administers housing vouchers and provides housing related consumer education, counseling and referrals to residents. They serve as a "first point of contact" for inquiries related to affordable housing. Their affiliated development entity, Rural Development Inc. (RDI) develops affordable housing.



**Resources**

<https://www.mass.gov/lists/housing-choice-resources>

- Agreement between Acton, Bedford, Burlington, Concord, Lexington, Sudbury and Weston, 2017
- Inter Municipal Agreement between Hudson, Hudson Municipal Affordable Housing Trust, Bolton, Boxborough, Littleton, Stow and Devens Enterprise Commission, 2017
- Agreement between North Reading, Reading, Saugus, and Wilmington, 2018
- Franklin County Housing and Redevelopment Authority, Annual Report October 1, 2017 to September 30, 2018
- 6-Town Regional Shared housing Services Office, Metropolitan Area Planning Council, 2011

**REGIONAL HOUSING SERVICES OFFICE, ESTABLISHED 2011**

Member Towns receive housing services for an annual fee per Inter-Municipal Agreement:

- Monitoring
- Inventory Management
- Program Administration
- Assessment Valuations
- Local Support, Website
- Regional Collaboration

**Town of Concord Lead Community**

RHSD Personnel deliver services through Lead Community.

Membership Fee covers all staffing and administrative expenses, such as accounting, office support, mail, technology, etc.

	Housing Units	Restricted Units	Restricted Ownership	SPH%
Acton	8,675	552	55	6.51%
Bedford	5,322	974	52	18.30%
Burlington	9,627	1008	59	10.47%
Concord	6,852	718	89	10.48%
Lexington	11,946	1337	13	11.19%
Sudbury	5,921	357	36	6.03%
Weston	3,952	149	27	3.77%
	52,895	5,095	311	9.78%