

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.



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

Table 1. Summary of Regional Housing Services providers

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

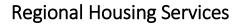
Each of these regional housing service providers has a different management and staffing approach. The Concord-based RHSO is staffed by four independent contractors who each contract with the Town of Concord on an annual basis. In the first iteration of this RHSO, the Town of Sudbury was the lead agency 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

