

Chapter I: General Requirements/Introduction

A. Lead Agency Description

Rhode Island Housing is a self-sustaining quasi-public agency established by the General Assembly in 1973. Rhode Island Housing works to ensure that all people who live or work in Rhode Island can afford a safe, healthy home that meets their needs. As the state's Housing Finance Agency, Rhode Island Housing provides low-interest loans, grants, education, advocacy and consumer counseling to help Rhode Islanders buy and retain their homes. They also offer special programs to ensure that these homes are safe and healthy.

Rhode Island Housing was designated the State Principal Housing Agency in 1991. It is responsible for administering most state and federal funds for the development of affordable homes. These include federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits, HOME funds and Lead Hazard Reduction Program funds as well as stimulus funding through the Tax Credit Assistance Program (TCAP) and the Tax Credit Exchange Program (TCEP). Through Memoranda of Understanding, Rhode Island Housing also administers the state's portion of the federal Neighborhood Stabilization Program as well as the state's affordable housing programs, including Building Homes RI, the Neighborhood Opportunity Program, and the state Lead Hazard Reduction Program. Rhode Island Housing also acts as the lead agency in the application for the state's Continuum of Care application to HUD as well as the reporting agency for HUD's Consolidated Plan and its related annual reports. Rhode Island Housing also acts as the state's Housing Authority, administering the Section 8 voucher program for 15 municipalities.

Rhode Island Housing has also been assigned certain statutory and regulatory roles by the General Assembly, including various responsibilities under the state's Low- and Moderate-Income Housing Act, and responsibility for the implementation of the Madeline Walker Act.

B. Significant Aspects of the Process

This document represents a new five-year Consolidated Plan for the State of Rhode Island (2010-2015), replacing the 2005-2010 Plan. The Consolidated Plan is a collaborative process through which a state or local jurisdiction identifies its housing, homeless and community development needs and establishes goals, priorities and strategies for addressing those needs.

Every five years, the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires states and local jurisdictions to prepare a Consolidated Plan in order to receive funding from four HUD programs. The Plan serves as an application for the Community Development Block Grant Program (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnership Program (HOME), Emergency Shelter Grant Program (ESG), and the Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS Program (HOPWA). In Rhode Island, the State's plan does not cover the application for HOPWA funds, which is prepared by the City of Providence. The Consolidated Plan also serves as a broad planning document that sets priorities for allocating funding received through these programs throughout Rhode Island.

Three overarching national goals drive the consolidated planning process, principally geared towards low- and moderate- income persons. These include:

- 1) To provide decent housing,
- 2) To provide a suitable living environment, and
- 3) To expand economic opportunity

Four specific goals provide the framework for the Rhode Island Consolidated Planning process. These include:

- To gain an understanding of how the housing environment and trends have changed since the 2005-2010 plan was developed;
- To gain a broad and in-depth input from citizens about their housing and community development needs and goals;
- To update available data from the previous plan, in the absence of a new decennial Census; and,
- To identify the unique objectives and outcomes for affordable housing in Rhode Island.

Based on HUD guidelines, the components of the Consolidated Plan are organized into eight major sections, including:

- I. General Requirements/Introduction
- II. Executive Summary
- III. Citizen Participation Plan
- IV. Housing and Homeless Needs Assessment
- V. Housing Market Analysis
- VI. Strategic Plan
- VII. Action Plans
- VIII. Monitoring

While the first five sections listed above are submitted to HUD once every five years, the Action Plans and Certifications must be updated and submitted to HUD annually. Each Action Plan describes how Rhode Island anticipates awarding the program funds it receives that year.

C. Identification of Participants

The submission and preparation of the Consolidated Plan is a joint effort between Rhode Island Housing and the State's Office of Housing and Community Development. Rhode Island Housing has lead responsibility for completing the plan and concentrating on the state's housing issues; the Office of Housing and Community Development, Housing Resources Commission focuses on Rhode Island's community development issues.

D. Description of State's Consultations

Throughout the Consolidated Plan development process, Rhode Island Housing and its partners consulted and met with many other public and private agencies to gather data and discuss the state's housing and community development needs and priorities to be included in the plan. These agencies included: health and social services agencies; non-profit organizations; public housing authorities; state, city and town representatives; housing developers and providers; and members of the business community.

During the summer of 2009, Rhode Island Housing facilitated seven focus groups held at different locations throughout the state, to gather input from citizens and agency professionals to help redefine Rhode Island's housing and community development needs. Each focus group covered issues pertaining to:

- Healthy Homes
- Family Housing
- Homelessness
- Housing for Elderly Citizens
- Housing for Individuals with Disabilities
- Fair Housing
- Community Development and Housing

In their entirety, the focus groups were attended by 126 individuals representing nearly 90 different organizations, government agencies, interest groups and businesses affiliated with Rhode Island organizations, and members of the public, who provided valuable input on the current housing and community development needs, for input into the Plan. A record of the focus group meetings, including dates, attendees and meeting notes is included in the appendix.

Public Hearings

Four public hearings were held in different areas of the state during the Consolidated Plan planning process, to provide input into the plan and help further define the state's housing and community development needs. Two public hearings were held in mid-October 2009, to provide input into the draft plan, one at the Newport Heights Housing development in Newport, Rhode Island, and one at Rhode Island Housing's offices in Providence. Two additional public hearings were held in mid-December 2009, to provide input into the final draft plan, one at Heritage Village in North Kingstown, and the second at Rhode Island Housing's offices in Providence. Non-profit agencies, community representatives, public housing agencies and the public were invited to comment on the plan at public hearings.

Comment Period

The Draft Consolidated Plan was issued on December 14, 2009 for a 30-day public comment period.

Access to Information

Rhode Island solicited comments on the draft Consolidated Plan by announcing its availability and the deadline for the 30-day comment period in the statewide newspaper and two minority newspapers. The draft Consolidated Plan was also posted on Rhode Island Housing's webpage and notice of its availability was provided directly to all focus group participants.

When completed, copies of the Consolidated Plan, as submitted to HUD, will be sent to the Rhode Island State House library. The Consolidated Plan will also be available to private citizens upon request.

Chapter II: Executive Summary

The State of Rhode Island's 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan is submitted pursuant to a U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) rule (24 CFR 3/13/2006) as a single submission covering the planning and application aspects of HUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG), and HOME Investment Partnership (HOME) programs.

A. Objectives and Outcomes

The State of Rhode Island's 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan outlines the main objectives, including priorities and strategies for the delivery of funds to address housing and community development needs for low- and moderate-income households. There are several overarching priorities that Rhode Island will continue to evaluate and address during the period covered by this Consolidated Plan. These include:

- increasing production of affordable rental homes in key geographic locations for priority populations;
- focusing on the need for affordable homes linked to supportive services;
- addressing the negative impacts of the foreclosure crisis, particularly for minority and low- and moderate-income households and hard hit urban communities;
- ensuring that Rhode Island's aging housing stock is safe, healthy and energy efficient
- reducing barriers to the development of affordable homes; and
- preserving our natural resources by working together to prioritize development in areas close to jobs, transportation, infrastructure and services.

Rhode Island continues to make headway into its many affordable housing needs despite significant setbacks over the last five years. On the heels of the historic rise in housing prices, the recent foreclosure crisis coupled with the state's second-place unemployment ranking at 12.7% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, November 2009) has placed enormous pressures on the state and its residents to meet housing needs. However, the strategies set forth in the Consolidated Plan for the coming five years seek to address these issues, including new construction and rehabilitation of 1,900 affordable apartments and homes; prioritization of supportive housing, including the creation of 250 new Permanent Supportive Housing units; community revitalization, especially in areas most devastated by the foreclosure crisis; an increased emphasis on all aspects of Healthy Homes, to complement lead-based paint abatement efforts; and a continued commitment to breaking down barriers to affordable housing, including the promotion of Fair Housing and implementation of Affirmative Fair Marketing, as well as supporting anti-poverty efforts. These strategies are especially aimed to address the needs of extremely and very low-income households, special needs populations and homeless populations as discussed below.

The State's progress in achieving the goals outlined above will be measured through specific objectives, outcome measures and indicators in accordance with the March 7, 2006 Performance Measurement Final Rule established by HUD.

B. Evaluation of Past Performance

The time period covering the 2005-2010 Consolidated Plan saw major challenges for increasing affordable housing and homeownership opportunities in Rhode Island. The state's housing market reached an historic peak during 2005 and 2006. While increasing the state's homeownership rates, it made housing increasingly unaffordable for many low- and moderate-income households. More recently, the economic recession, the state's foreclosure crisis, and market difficulties affecting such programs as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, continues to threaten the viability of many of the state's communities and homeowners.

The activities and strategies funded through the Consolidated Plan 2005-2010 made an important impact on Rhode Island's housing, homeless, and community development needs. The goal of providing safe, decent affordable housing and a suitable living environment continues to be accomplished by housing development and supportive service programs administered by both Rhode Island Housing and the State's Housing Resources Commission. The goal of expanding economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income persons continues to be met through the State's CDBG economic development program. The demand for programs funded under CDBG, HOME, and ESG, continues to remain greater than available funding.

During Program Years 2005 to 2009 Rhode Island Housing and its partners accomplished many of the goals set forth in the 2005-2010 Consolidated Plan. While the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report for 2009-2010 will be submitted in May 2010, a summary of accomplishments for the 2005-2010 Consolidated Plan includes:

Aging Population

- 534 units of elderly low- moderate income assisted housing were created during the years 2005 to 2009.
- The Rhode Island Housing homeownership division assisted 199 elderly homeowners with reverse mortgages.

CDBG

- Of the more than \$20 million received for the State's CDBG program, more than half was used for housing rehabilitation and development.

Homeless Needs

- The ESG program provided funds for shelters to provide over 888,000 bed nights for more than 26,000 homeless individuals with emergency housing.

Homeownership strategy

- Rhode Island Housing's homeownership division assisted 4,890 households, including 3,703 first mortgages, 339 second mortgages, and 200 reverse mortgages for elderly homeowners.
- The HOME program created 177 long-term affordable homes for moderate-income Rhode Island households below 80% MFI.
- Established in November 2007, over 6,000 Rhode Island homeowners have contacted the Help Center for assistance, and over 3,300 have met with counselors

Chapter II: Executive Summary

Housing Opportunities for Extremely Low-Income Families and Individuals

- Despite a severe State budget crisis, funding continued for the Neighborhood Opportunities Program (NOP), creating housing opportunities for extremely low-income families and individuals.
- The HOPWA program allowed for the administration of 46 units of permanent supportive housing for persons with AIDS.
- HOME funds allowed for the creation of 426 units of affordable rental apartments, including units for permanent supportive housing.

Lead-Based Paint Hazards

- 765 housing units made lead safe through the State lead program, 23,000 units into compliance with the Lead Hazard Mitigation Standard; 837 lead hazard units were rehabilitated by Rhode Island Housing using Lead Hazard Reduction funds.
- 19,000 rental units received Certificates of Conformance and 4,000 received Presumptive Compliance Status.

Neighborhood Revitalization and Smart Growth

- State neighborhood revitalization initiatives have been conducted in 18 (55%) of Rhode Island's 33 non-entitlement communities; additional comprehensive programs are being considered by municipalities.

Rural Development

- Affordable Housing Plans were approved for all 29 of the state's rural and suburban communities.
- 978 affordable rental and homeownership housing units were developed in suburban and rural municipalities, working towards the mandate of 10% low- to moderate-income in all 39 of the states municipalities.

Chapter II: Executive Summary

The State of Rhode Island's 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan is submitted pursuant to a U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) rule (24 CFR 3/13/2006) as a single submission covering the planning and application aspects of HUD's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), Emergency Shelter Grant (ESG), and HOME Investment Partnership (HOME) programs.

A. Objectives and Outcomes

The State of Rhode Island's 2010-2015 Consolidated Plan outlines the main objectives, including priorities and strategies for the delivery of funds to address housing and community development needs for low- and moderate-income households. There are several overarching priorities that Rhode Island will continue to evaluate and address during the period covered by this Consolidated Plan. These include:

- increasing production of affordable rental homes in key geographic locations for priority populations;
- focusing on the need for affordable homes linked to supportive services;
- addressing the negative impacts of the foreclosure crisis, particularly for minority and low- and moderate-income households and hard hit urban communities;
- ensuring that Rhode Island's aging housing stock is safe, healthy and energy efficient
- reducing barriers to the development of affordable homes; and
- preserving our natural resources by working together to prioritize development in areas close to jobs, transportation, infrastructure and services.

Rhode Island continues to make headway into its many affordable housing needs despite significant setbacks over the last five years. On the heels of the historic rise in housing prices, the recent foreclosure crisis coupled with the state's second-place unemployment ranking at 12.7% (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, November 2009) has placed enormous pressures on the state and its residents to meet housing needs. However, the strategies set forth in the Consolidated Plan for the coming five years seek to address these issues, including new construction and rehabilitation of 1,900 affordable apartments and homes; prioritization of supportive housing, including the creation of 250 new Permanent Supportive Housing units; community revitalization, especially in areas most devastated by the foreclosure crisis; an increased emphasis on all aspects of Healthy Homes, to complement lead-based paint abatement efforts; and a continued commitment to breaking down barriers to affordable housing, including the promotion of Fair Housing and implementation of Affirmative Fair Marketing, as well as supporting anti-poverty efforts. These strategies are especially aimed to address the needs of extremely and very low-income households, special needs populations and homeless populations as discussed below.

The State's progress in achieving the goals outlined above will be measured through specific objectives, outcome measures and indicators in accordance with the March 7, 2006 Performance Measurement Final Rule established by HUD.

B. Evaluation of Past Performance

The time period covering the 2005-2010 Consolidated Plan saw major challenges for increasing affordable housing and homeownership opportunities in Rhode Island. The state's housing market reached an historic peak during 2005 and 2006. While increasing the state's homeownership rates, it made housing increasingly unaffordable for many low- and moderate-income households. More recently, the economic recession, the state's foreclosure crisis, and market difficulties affecting such programs as the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit, continues to threaten the viability of many of the state's communities and homeowners.

The activities and strategies funded through the Consolidated Plan 2005-2010 made an important impact on Rhode Island's housing, homeless, and community development needs. The goal of providing safe, decent affordable housing and a suitable living environment continues to be accomplished by housing development and supportive service programs administered by both Rhode Island Housing and the State's Housing Resources Commission. The goal of expanding economic opportunities for low- and moderate-income persons continues to be met through the State's CDBG economic development program. The demand for programs funded under CDBG, HOME, and ESG, continues to remain greater than available funding.

During Program Years 2005 to 2009 Rhode Island Housing and its partners accomplished many of the goals set forth in the 2005-2010 Consolidated Plan. While the Consolidated Annual Performance Evaluation Report for 2009-2010 will be submitted in May 2010, a summary of accomplishments for the 2005-2010 Consolidated Plan includes:

Aging Population

- 534 units of elderly low- moderate income assisted housing were created during the years 2005 to 2009.
- The Rhode Island Housing homeownership division assisted 199 elderly homeowners with reverse mortgages.

CDBG

- Of the more than \$20 million received for the State's CDBG program, more than half was used for housing rehabilitation and development.

Homeless Needs

- The ESG program provided funds for shelters to provide over 888,000 bed nights for more than 26,000 homeless individuals with emergency housing.

Homeownership strategy

- Rhode Island Housing's homeownership division assisted 4,890 households, including 3,703 first mortgages, 339 second mortgages, and 200 reverse mortgages for elderly homeowners.
- The HOME program created 177 long-term affordable homes for moderate-income Rhode Island households below 80% MFI.
- Established in November 2007, over 6,000 Rhode Island homeowners have contacted the Help Center for assistance, and over 3,300 have met with counselors

Chapter II: Executive Summary

Housing Opportunities for Extremely Low-Income Families and Individuals

- Despite a severe State budget crisis, funding continued for the Neighborhood Opportunities Program (NOP), creating housing opportunities for extremely low-income families and individuals.
- The HOPWA program allowed for the administration of 46 units of permanent supportive housing for persons with AIDS.
- HOME funds allowed for the creation of 426 units of affordable rental apartments, including units for permanent supportive housing.

Lead-Based Paint Hazards

- 765 housing units made lead safe through the State lead program, 23,000 units into compliance with the Lead Hazard Mitigation Standard; 837 lead hazard units were rehabilitated by Rhode Island Housing using Lead Hazard Reduction funds.
- 19,000 rental units received Certificates of Conformance and 4,000 received Presumptive Compliance Status.

Neighborhood Revitalization and Smart Growth

- State neighborhood revitalization initiatives have been conducted in 18 (55%) of Rhode Island's 33 non-entitlement communities; additional comprehensive programs are being considered by municipalities.

Rural Development

- Affordable Housing Plans were approved for all 29 of the state's rural and suburban communities.
- 978 affordable rental and homeownership housing units were developed in suburban and rural municipalities, working towards the mandate of 10% low- to moderate-income in all 39 of the states municipalities.