



## INVESTNH MUNICIPAL PLANNING & ZONING GRANT PROGRAM: COMMUNITY HOUSING NAVIGATOR GRANT PROGRAM

### Program Information and Application Instructions

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### SECTION 1: PROGRAM INFORMATION

#### Introduction

The InvestNH Municipal Planning & Zoning Grant Program provides competitive grants for cities and towns to create local regulations that will help increase housing supply. The InvestNH **Community Housing Navigator Grant Program** is part of the Planning & Zoning Grant Program and is administered by New Hampshire Housing under contract with the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA). These programs are all part of InvestNH, a \$100 million initiative funded through the American Rescue Plan Act's State Fiscal Recovery Fund.<sup>1</sup>

#### Program Background

Recognizing that existing land use regulatory frameworks pose unnecessary barriers to housing development, the purpose of the **Community Housing Navigator Grant Program** is to provide resources to the state's communities to undertake reforms. Local master plans often express communities' desires for a diversity of housing types that are affordable to a range of incomes for people of all ages, including starter homes, apartments near jobs, and places to retire, but the zoning ordinances and other land use regulations adopted by those communities often are at odds with that vision.

In many communities it is hard to undertake regulatory reform. This is the result of inadequate financial and technical resources necessary to make such changes. The Community Housing Navigator Grant Program will help municipalities overcome these financial and technical barriers by increasing their staff capacity and will also advance earlier efforts in New Hampshire that yielded substantial promise (for

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example, the Housing and Conservation Planning Program, Community Planning Grant Program, and Municipal Technical Assistance Grant Program). These initiatives have produced building blocks of sustainable community development: comprehensive planning and regulations, detailed technical guidance, and a focus on balance among environmental stewardship, historic preservation, social equity, and economic development – all within a context of participatory community planning. The Community Housing Navigator Grant Program provides funding to implement some of these policies in the local regulatory framework for the specific purpose of increasing the state’s housing supply.

### **InvestNH Community Housing Navigator Grant Program Administration**

New Hampshire Housing’s administration of the Community Housing Navigator Grant Program will be guided by a Steering Committee that consists of representatives from the following entities:

- New Hampshire Housing
- NH Community Development Finance Authority
- New Hampshire Municipal Association
- New Hampshire Office of Planning and Development
- Plan NH
- University of New Hampshire (UNH) Cooperative Extension

The Steering Committee will provide assistance in developing public communications materials and reports, evaluate municipal grant applications, and decide on grant approvals.

Community Housing Navigator grants will be administered by Plan NH under contract with NH Housing.

## **SECTION 2: ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS, PURPOSE, AND APPLICATION DEADLINE**

### **Eligible Applicants**

Applicant eligibility is limited to incorporated New Hampshire cities and towns, as well as village districts that have zoning authority or counties in which there are unincorporated places (“municipalities”).

**Joint applications** from multiple municipalities may be coordinated by a regional planning commission or by a regional workforce housing coalition (“regional coordinator”). For joint applications, the regional coordinator will serve as the applicant, but the application must include a letter of support from any municipality intended to be served by the grant. *It is strongly recommended that joint applications should be limited to serving no more than four municipalities*, because the purpose of this grant program is to provide concentrated support for regulatory change at the local level.

Smaller communities are encouraged to partner with other communities in their region and collaborate with a regional coordinator in the submission of a joint application.

Note that municipalities that have been awarded a Community Housing Navigator grant are also eligible to apply for InvestNH Housing Opportunity Planning (HOP) Grants. Information about the HOP Grant Program may be found at [www.NHHOPgrants.org](http://www.NHHOPgrants.org).

## Purpose of Grants

Up to six grants will be made for the purpose of hiring Community Housing Navigators for a period of up to two years (ending 9/30/2024 at the latest). The Community Housing Navigators will serve as local coordinators of housing regulatory changes and housing development activities. This will include working with outside consultants and municipal staff to identify regulatory changes needed to promote greater levels of housing development. Community Housing Navigators will work on at least one of the regulatory change phases identified in the InvestNH HOP Grant Program.

The Community Housing Navigator Grant program will be administered by Plan NH under contract with NH Housing.

## Application Deadline

- Grant applications will open on August 5, 2022.
- Complete applications must be submitted no later than 4:30 p.m. ET on September 30, 2022 to [info@NHHOPgrants.org](mailto:info@NHHOPgrants.org).
- Awards will be made on or before October 14, 2022.

Questions regarding the grant program and application may be submitted via [info@NHHOPgrants.org](mailto:info@NHHOPgrants.org) on or before September 21, 2022. Responses to all questions will be posted at [www.NHHOPgrants.org](http://www.NHHOPgrants.org) no later than September 23, 2022.

## SECTION 3: USE OF GRANT FUNDS

Grants of up to \$250,000 per grant will be made for a period of approximately two years (ending September 30, 2024 at the latest). Generally, no more than \$125,000 per grantee will be allocated for any 12-month period (exceptions may be granted by the Steering Committee). Grants may be used to pay salary and fringe benefit costs, as well as reasonable travel costs and expense reimbursements. Grant funds may be used for computer hardware and software up to a maximum of \$5,000 for the full grant period.

Grantees must use the grant funds to increase capacity at the local level. New staff may be hired or the number of hours worked by existing staff may be increased (e.g., increasing part-time staff to full-time). The grants may not be used to offset the costs associated with existing staff capacity.

Grantees must commit to working on at least one of the three phases identified in the InvestNH HOP Grant Program application instructions (see [www.NHHOPgrants.org](http://www.NHHOPgrants.org)). *A community may receive a HOP Grant to complement the work of the Community Housing Navigator, but not to duplicate it.*

Community Housing Navigators will be involved in outreach and engagement with the public in their municipalities by providing education, soliciting ideas for regulatory changes, and seeking input on regulatory proposals. They will also work directly with developers, property owners, housing coalitions, and others with a direct interest in housing development for the purpose of facilitating specific

developments. In this latter capacity, Community Housing Navigators will serve as a critical link between municipal regulators and those who seek to develop land.

It is expected that Community Housing Navigators will be hired as employees of the grantee municipality (or of the regional coordinator, in the case of a joint application). Grantees will have up to three months from the grant award date to hire a Community Housing Navigator. Community Housing Navigators must be professional-level employees, rather than administrative staff. A model job description for a Community Housing Navigator is included in this document as Exhibit A.

**Prohibitions on Use of Grant Funds.**

- Grant funds may not be used for the acquisition of property.
- Grant funds may not be used to pay for equipment, except as noted herein.

There is no cash or in-kind match requirement for these grants.

**Community Engagement**

Community engagement is an essential part of the work to be done under these grants. Community Housing Navigators will work with UNH Cooperative Extension to understand and develop appropriate engagement plans. To ensure a robust community engagement effort, UNH Cooperative Extension has created Housing Academy. Community Housing Navigators will be expected to participate in Housing Academy activities. *See the Housing Academy description in Exhibit B.*

**Scoring Criteria**

Grants will be awarded to communities on a competitive basis. Applications will be scored based on the following characteristics:

1. Overall clarity of narrative, including goals, and expected outcomes; demonstrate a commitment to increasing housing supply	35 points
2. Consistency with the purposes of the grant program, including a commitment to work on at least one of the phases in the InvestNH HOP Grant Program	35 points
3. Commitment to or willingness to develop and implement community engagement plan	20 points
4. Clarity and thoughtfulness of scope of work and budget	10 points

**SECTION 4: PREPARING THE GRANT APPLICATION**

Please follow the grant application guidelines below. Submit your answers in PDF file format to: [info@NHHOPgrants.org](mailto:info@NHHOPgrants.org). If you would like to discuss the grant before completing the application, please contact us using the same email.

## Cover Page

Include the following information on one page (in this order), and include one to two sentences about the municipality as background for the Steering Committee.

- Name and mailing address of municipality or regional coordinator;
- Project contact person's name, affiliation with community, phone, email;
- Unique Entity Identifier (UEI);<sup>2</sup>
- Individual municipal applications must include the signature of municipality's chief executive officer or other authorized representative of the local governing body. Alternatively, the planning board may submit an application pursuant to its authority to receive grants in RSA 673:16, I. A planning board submission should be signed and dated by the board chair and include as an attachment the minutes of the meeting at which the planning board authorized the grant application as well as a letter of support from the local governing body;
- Joint applications must be signed by a duly authorized representative of the regional coordinator and indicate which municipalities will be served by the grant. They must include letters from those municipalities expressing support for the Community Housing Navigator's work in their communities;
- Grant amount requested.

## APPLICATION NARRATIVE

The narrative should outline what the municipality expects to achieve with the assistance of the Community Housing Navigator. The narrative should include the following sections:

**Housing Challenge and Project Goals** (*maximum 750 words*). Clearly and concisely describe the housing challenge your community is facing and how the Community Housing Navigator will help to address that challenge. In the case of joint applications, please describe the housing challenges and how the Community Housing Navigator will help address those challenges for each municipality (joint applications have a maximum 1,500 words).

**Outcomes and Deliverables** (*maximum 500 words*). Describe desired outcomes. What do you hope to achieve? How will you know if the work of the Community Housing Navigator is a success? How will the results you obtain be used to increase housing supply in your community? (Please review the Grantee Responsibilities and Evaluation section below). In the case of joint applications, describe the anticipated outcomes and deliverables for each municipality (joint applications have a maximum 1,000 words).

**Scope of Work and Budget.** List and describe different elements of your budget, and include any tasks, milestones, and final work products expected to be completed, together with a timetable for task completion. Details for each task shall include:

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<sup>2</sup> The Unique Entity Identifier (UEI) recently replaced the Data Universal Numbering System (DUNS) number as the method used to uniquely identify individuals and entities receive federal funding. You can apply for the HOP Grant Program using your TIN, but for your award to be finalized you will need to show that you have applied for or received a UEI. You can apply for a UEI at [www.sam.gov](http://www.sam.gov).

- Name of task;
- Who will perform the task (if known);
- Brief summary of the task, including anticipated final work products;
- All project partners and their role; and
- Overall cost and statement of anticipated expenses.

Please include a budget using the template here.

BUDGET TEMPLATE			
	Task Name	Details	Cost
Task 1	Community Engagement		\$2,500
Task 2	Community Engagement, Additional (optional)		
Task 3	Housing Academy Stipend	X people at \$250 per attendee	
Task 4	Administrative costs. No more than 7.5% of total project cost.		
Task 5	Computer hardware and software (not to exceed \$5,000)		
Task 6			
Task 7			
Task 8			
Task 9			
Task 10			
Total:			\$

**Community Engagement Plan** (maximum 500 words). Good public engagement leads to broader citizen participation in public decisions. The engagement process includes listening, discussion, deliberation, and decision-making that builds relationships with the community. Community Housing Navigators will work with UNH Cooperative Extension to understand and develop appropriate engagement plans. Please describe as well as you can how you expect to use engagement as a tool in your community.

To ensure a robust community engagement effort, Community Housing Navigators may identify up to three other people from the community to participate in community engagement training and receive support from UNH Cooperative Extension through Housing Academy (joint applications may include up to three people from each community participating in the grant). Housing Academy has been developed to support community efforts in this grant program and is intended to hone engagement and leadership skills and help you develop a creative approach to community engagement. Housing Academy participants may include municipal staff, elected officials, representatives from land use boards, members of other local boards and committees, or other residents of the community. See *the Housing Academy description in Exhibit B*.

To encourage and support the involvement of volunteers in the municipality's community engagement efforts, stipends of \$250 per Housing Academy participant will be approved as allowable direct expenses. Paid municipal staff, including the Community Housing Navigators, are not eligible for these stipends.

The budget template, by default, includes \$2,500 for community engagement but applicants may request additional funding.

**Consistency with Master Plan** (*maximum 250 words*). If it pertains to your grant application, identify how the work of the Community Housing Navigator would relate to your local master plan, your regional planning commission's regional plan, or other relevant plans. This section is purely informative and is intended to provide background information. Consistency with your local master plan may support your application; inconsistency will not disqualify your application.

## **SECTION 5: EVALUATION, FUNDS DISBURSEMENT, COMPLIANCE, AND REPORTING**

### **Grantee Responsibilities and Evaluation**

Community Housing Navigator Grant Program grantees will be required to report on progress toward implementing their proposed scope of work, completed tasks, and metrics of success including documentation on public meetings, workshops and hearings, public participation levels, and additional outreach and engagement efforts.

Depending on grant phase, expected Community Housing Navigator deliverables include one or more of the following:

- Demonstrated and documented understanding of values and attitudes toward housing;
- Identified regulatory barriers to housing development;
- Demonstrated understanding of the cost of development as it relates to land use regulations and permitting process;
- Improved skills in community engagement tools and facilitation of effective housing discussions;
- Drafted text of regulatory amendments;
- Documentation of work to support developers, property owners, and housing coalitions to obtain local approvals of specific housing developments; and
- A plan to move forward with regulatory change, incentives, or other means to increase housing supply and affordability.

### **Disbursement of Grant Funds**

Funds awarded from the Community Housing Navigator Grant Program will be disbursed quarterly. The first quarterly disbursement will be made upon execution of the grant agreement. Reports of expenses incurred must be submitted regularly to the Program Administrator via email to [info@NHOPgrants.org](mailto:info@NHOPgrants.org). The Program Administrator will review and approve all submitted reports.

## **Compliance**

*Terms and Conditions: Compliance with Federal Regulations, State Legislation, Statutes, and Regulations.* By acceptance of this award, each grant recipient agrees to comply with these requirements of “Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards (Uniform Guidance)” located in title 2 of the Code of Federal Regulations (2 CFR part 200). Failure to comply may result in disallowances, restricted drawdown, and withholding of future awards.

Please refer to this website as an example of federal guidance:

- [www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/ih/regs/resources](http://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/ih/regs/resources)

## **Post Grant Reporting**

Municipal grantees will be required to submit data to the Program Administrator, reporting on implementation and outcomes, for a period of three years after grant close-out.

## **Inquiries and Application Submission**

Direct inquiries and submit applications to: [info@NHHOPgrants.org](mailto:info@NHHOPgrants.org)

## EXHIBIT A

### COMMUNITY HOUSING NAVIGATOR

#### Expectations and Responsibilities

**Note:** This overview of expectations and responsibilities of the Community Housing Navigator is intended as a template for grantees – please tailor this job description to the specific needs of your community.

#### Potential Responsibilities of a Community Housing Navigator:

Housing navigators will serve as local coordinators of housing regulatory change and housing development activities. This may include, but is not limited to:

- Participate in Housing Academy facilitated by UNH Cooperative Extension. This may include identifying others from within the community to participate as well.
- Engage with the regional planning commission and regional housing coalition (where applicable).
- Work with consultants where applicable to conduct housing needs analysis, regulatory audits, or regulatory change.
- Work directly with housing developers, property owners, and housing coalitions for the purpose of facilitating specific developments.
- Facilitate outreach and engagement efforts with the public by providing education, soliciting ideas for regulatory changes, and seeking input on regulatory proposals.
- Engage with local employers and others from the business community about the impact of the housing crisis on their ability to recruit and retain workers.
- Work toward establishment of a municipal housing commission (pursuant to RSA 674:44-h), a housing revolving fund (pursuant to RSA 31-95-h), and/or a municipal housing trust fund.

All communities receiving a Community Housing Navigator Grant must commit to working on at least one of three phrases identified in the Housing Opportunity Planning (HOP) Grant Program. Municipalities that are awarded a Community Housing Navigator grant may also apply for a HOP Grant to hire a consultant that will work closely with the Community Housing Navigator.

#### Recommended Skills and Qualifications of Community Housing Navigators:

- Experience in community engagement and outreach, project management, and community organizing
- Familiarity with housing development, zoning regulations, and municipal government
- Bachelor's degree in planning, public administration, or other similar field, and 2 years of professional experience.

## EXHIBIT B

### HOUSING ACADEMY: ENGAGING YOUR COMMUNITY FOR MORE HOUSING OPTIONS

The **InvestNH Municipal Planning & Zoning Grant Program** will include Housing Academy, developed by UNH Extension, to provide education and community engagement training. This training is for municipalities that receive **Community Housing Navigator** or **Housing Opportunity Planning (HOP) Grant** funding.

Housing Academy will help participants learn how to engage with their community, set priorities and plan for an increase in housing supply at the community level.

Housing Academy will be a hybrid format with webinars, online materials, in-person gatherings, and place-based training. Community engagement techniques and tools will be taught so participants can develop and implement an engagement plan in their city or town. There will be opportunities for communities to share best practices and challenges and learn from each other.

**For more information:**

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