

DRAFT

Housing Opportunities Technical Assistance to Municipalities Program Proposal

Concept:

The Commission to Increase Housing Opportunities in Maine by Studying Zoning and Land Use Restrictions will make recommendations to the Legislature designed to expand housing and reduce zoning and regulatory barriers to housing opportunities.

Most municipal governments will require technical assistance to implement the Commission's recommendations.

This proposal offers a framework for the Commission's consideration for how to fund technical assistance to municipalities, recognizing that a variety of technical assistance providers will be required to support the differing levels of municipal need and expertise across Maine.

Unified Approach:

To expand housing choices in ways that protect public investments in transportation and other infrastructure, while ensuring new housing supports the state in reaching its racial equity and climate goals, cross-agency coordination is needed.

We propose a pilot program of two years in which a single state entity manage the *Housing Opportunities Technical Assistance to Municipalities* program to ensure consistent application of Commission policy recommendations. This entity should have the capacity to ensure statewide fairness in the distribution of resources, and to coordinate across state agencies to align state racial equity, climate, transportation, and economic policies with the implementation of this program. The pilot phase will enable the state to find the best long-term home for this project, should the program prove effective, in ensuing years.

Multiple Technical Assistance Channels:

We propose that the managing state entity establish the following municipal technical assistance channels, recognizing that different channels will be more or less viable in different areas of the state:

- Direct state Technical Assistance, provided, to individual municipalities by personnel in the managing state entity, by sister-agency personnel, and/or by contractors hired by the state. Resources will be needed to support this additional capacity.
- Regional Technical Assistance, funded by the state by contract with a regional planning organization or other regional entity that has demonstrated capacity to provide Technical Assistance to municipalities in a region.
- Direct municipal Technical Assistance grants, funded by the state directly to individual municipalities with capacity to implement the Commission's recommendations without additional support.

Pilot Program:

We propose that a two-year pilot program be established in 2022 to test and perfect each of the proposed Technical Assistance delivery channels in representative municipalities and regions across Maine.

Piloting the *Housing Opportunities Technical Assistance to Municipalities* program will allow the administering state entity to refine its statewide implementation of program in 2023.

Funding Requirements:

We propose that in 2022 no less than \$1,500,000 be provided to run the proposed Pilot program and provide technical assistance funding to at least four regions that well represent the diversity of the state's regions. This first year's experience will help refine budget estimates for implementation of the program in 2023 and for continued implementation in ensuing years.

We propose that in 2023 an expanded amount of resources be available to begin scaling up the program, amounting to an allocation of at least \$2,500,000 statewide per year for the *Housing Opportunities Technical Assistance to Municipalities* program. That allocation should be refined based on the experience in 2022. This funding would include an average of \$200,000 per region per year, scaled to fit various regions, and for those regions willing and able to provide regional technical assistance.