



InvestNH Municipal Planning & Zoning Grant Program: Housing Opportunity Planning Grant Program 2.0

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SECTION 1: Program Information

Introduction

The InvestNH Municipal Planning & Zoning Grant Program provides grants for cities and towns in New Hampshire to create local regulations that will help increase housing supply, especially for affordable and workforce housing. The InvestNH Housing Opportunity Planning (HOP) Grant Program is part of the InvestNH Municipal Planning & Zoning Grant Program and is administered by New Hampshire Housing under contract with the NH Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA). This program is part of InvestNH, a \$100 million initiative funded through the American Rescue Plan Act's State Fiscal Recovery Fund.

This project is being supported by, in whole or in part, federal award number SLFRP0145 awarded to the State of New Hampshire by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

Program Background

Recognizing that land use regulations often pose unnecessary barriers to housing development, the purpose of the HOP Grant Program is to provide resources to communities across the state 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 many communities are at odds with that vision.

In many communities, it is hard to undertake regulatory reform as a result of inadequate financial and technical resources necessary to make such changes. The HOP Grant Program will help municipalities overcome impediments and will advance earlier efforts in New Hampshire that yielded substantial promise (for example, the Housing and Conservation Planning Program, the Community Planning Grant Program, the Municipal Technical Assistance Grant Program, and the initial round of Housing Opportunity Planning grants). 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 HOP Grant Program provides funding to implement some of these approaches in the local regulatory framework for the specific purpose of increasing the state’s housing supply, especially of affordable and workforce housing.

Program Administration

The HOP Grant Program is being administered by New Hampshire Housing and Plan New Hampshire with guidance by a Steering Committee that consists of representatives from the following entities:

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

The Steering Committee will provide assistance in developing public communications materials and reports and will evaluate grant applications.

SECTION 2: 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”). Municipalities that have been awarded a Community Housing Navigator grant or HOP grant in the past are eligible to apply. These grants are open to any community, but applications from communities that have previously received a Community Housing Navigator or HOP Grant will be reviewed first. Applicants may request no more than \$100,000 total per grant application, including 5% for grant administration. Applications are due September 30, 2024. Awards will be made within 60 days.

Purpose of Grants

These grants may be used to hire a consultant for the following activities:

- Update the housing, land use, and vision sections of the master plan, and related aspects of the implementation section, as well as the community facilities section or other relevant sections as they pertain to water and sewer in support of housing development.
- As part of a larger project, conduct a housing needs assessment or analysis.
- Audit the municipality's land use regulations and make recommendations for changes to promote housing development. Audits may be structured to do any of the following tasks (these tasks are intended to be illustrative, not exclusive):
 - Identify barriers to housing development that may exist in standards or processes;
 - Identify outdated regulatory schemes;
 - Specify changes to existing regulations;
 - Identify opportunities for new regulations; and
 - Cross-reference different regulations to ensure they are not in conflict.
- Create new regulations or revise existing regulations with the stated primary goal of increasing the supply of housing in the community, especially affordable and workforce housing. Regulations to be created or revised may include, but are not limited to:
 - Zoning;
 - Subdivision regulations;
 - Site plan regulations;
 - Any provisions adopted under RSA 674:21 that are related to or directly impact housing development;
 - Local building codes; and
 - Local tax incentives, including RSA 79-E.

Grant-funded activities should generally assist applicants to become eligible for New Hampshire housing champion designation pursuant to RSA 12-O:71.

All projects must include robust community engagement.

SECTION 3: Use of Grant Funds

Consultant

HOP Grants will provide municipalities with the financial resources to hire qualified consultants to conduct proposed project work. A consultant's costs may include time, including consultant-led community engagement, direct costs associated with the program, and indirect costs reasonably attributable to the project.

Grantees may contract with their regional planning commissions or select from the pre-approved list of qualified consultants for project work without engaging in a competitive bidding process. The list of qualified consultants can be found at

www.NHHopGrants.org/consultants. Any consultant may seek Steering Committee approval by following the instructions included in the *Request for Qualifications for InvestNH Housing Opportunity Planning Grant Program Consultant List* published at www.NHHopGrants.org/consultants.

Alternatively, grantees may undertake a competitive process to identify a consultant by issuing a Request for Qualifications or Request for Proposals. As a grant condition, the Steering Committee will assess the qualifications of any consultant not included on the pre-approved list and to reject any such consultant it deems to be unqualified to perform the proposed work.

Grant funds may not be used for the acquisition of property, to pay for equipment, or to pay for consultant services rendered prior to grant approval.

Administrative Costs

Administrative costs will consist of 5% of the total grant request and will be automatically calculated. This is intended to support costs incurred by the municipality, including printing, copying, mileage, and staff time that is directly related to administration of the HOP grant. No documentation is required for the administrative costs and the administrative costs will be paid to the municipality at the close of the grant. Funds for administrative costs are not to be paid to the consultant.

Community Engagement

Community engagement is an essential part of the work to be done under these grants. Grantees will work with Cooperative Extension at the University of New Hampshire to understand and develop appropriate community engagement plans. The application should describe how engagement will complement the proposal. To ensure community engagement efforts are robust, Cooperative Extension has created Housing Academy to support grantees' efforts.

Communities that participated in Housing Academy last year are welcome to attend again and send new representatives. Communities that have not yet participated must identify one and are encouraged to identify up to three community members to participate in the program. Each participant can expect to attend around five sessions. Some Housing Academy sessions take place at New Hampshire Housing's office in Bedford, some in a webinar or virtual meeting format, and some community visits elsewhere in the state. 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.

The content taught in Housing Academy is cumulative and attendees should plan to attend as many of the sessions as possible. The purpose of Housing Academy is to support grantees as they develop their community engagement plans. All grantees

should expect to submit a community engagement plan within the first six months of the grant period.

Participants should expect to engage in an online platform, Connect Extension, created to enable grantees to connect between sessions and have access to other grantees for support and resources.

Up to three volunteers per community participating in Housing Academy are eligible for a \$250 stipend at the close of Housing Academy. Please do not include these stipends in the project budget; stipends will be paid to grantees in a separate process. Paid municipal staff are invited to participate in Housing Academy but are not eligible for these stipends.

Scoring Criteria

Grants are awarded to communities on a competitive basis with the goal of making award decisions within 60 days of receipt of a completed application. Applications will be scored on the following characteristics:

1. **Housing Challenge and Project Goals:** *Overall clarity of the community's housing challenge and its project goals; demonstrated commitment to increasing housing opportunities.* 20 points
2. **Outcomes and Deliverables:** *Clarity and transparency around proposed outcomes; anticipated impact of those outcomes.* 20 points
3. **Readiness:** *Demonstration of readiness for this project among local leadership and the community; relevance of supporting attachments; consistency with regional or local plan(s).* 20 points
4. **Community Engagement Plan:** *Commitment to developing and implementing a community engagement plan; demonstration of creative or out-of-the-box thinking; description of recent engagement activities.* 20 points
5. **Scope of Work and Budget:** *Clarity and thoughtfulness of scope of work and budget; accuracy of proposed budget.* 20 points

SECTION 4: Preparing the Grant Application

Please follow the application guidelines below to complete your application. Submit your answers in PDF file format to info@NHHOPgrants.org. If you would like to discuss the grant before completing your application, please contact us at info@NHHOPgrants.org. Grant workshops will be scheduled in advance of the application deadline to help municipalities understand the grant program and prepare submissions.

Cover Page

Include the following information (in this order) as concisely as possible:

- Name of municipality and address of town hall or governing body.
- Project contact person's name, affiliation with community, phone number, and email address.
- An alternate contact person's name, affiliation with community, phone number, and email address.
- Date of the most recent Master Plan and section(s) of the Master Plan that support this project.
- One to two sentences about your community, as background for the Steering Committee.
- Unique Entity Identifier (UEI). You may apply using your TIN, but for your award to be finalized, you will need to demonstrate that you have applied for and received a UEI at www.sam.gov.
- Dated 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 an attachment of the minutes of the meeting at which the planning board authorized the grant application.

Application Narrative

The narrative should describe the proposed project in detail, outlining what the municipality expects to achieve. The narrative should include the following:

Housing Challenge and Project Goals (maximum 750 words). Clearly and concisely describe the housing challenge your community is facing and how this project will help to address that challenge.

Outcomes and Deliverables (maximum 500 words). Describe desired outcomes. What do you hope to achieve? How will you know if the project is a success? How will the results you have obtained be used to increase housing supply in your community? If appropriate, include a link to regulations to be audited or revised.

Readiness (maximum 500 words). Describe how the community has demonstrated readiness for this project. The applicant may include attachments or links to supplemental materials, as needed. Evidence of readiness may include:

- Recent meeting minutes or other communications from municipal bodies, such as the governing body and land use boards, and community organizations and businesses, expressing support for the overall goal of modifying the local land use regulatory framework to permit more housing, especially affordable and workforce housing.

- Existence of a housing committee, housing commission, or equivalent committee or commission.
- Recent regulatory audits and/or changes including housing-friendly zoning amendments adopted within three years of the date of application
- Prior community engagement efforts related to housing topics such as visioning sessions, public meetings, surveys, or similar.

Consistency with Local or Regional Plan(s) (maximum 250 words). Identify how the application relates to your local master plan, your regional planning commission’s housing needs assessment or regional plan, and/or other relevant plans.

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

Housing Academy. To ensure a robust community engagement effort, each grantee must identify at least one person (but may identify up to three) to participate in community engagement training and receive support from Cooperative Extension through Housing Academy. Housing Academy has been developed to support community efforts in this grant program and is intended to hone engagement and leadership skills and help grantees 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.

- **Identify who from your community will participate in Housing Academy, and their role, email address, and phone number.**
- **Housing Academy Stipends.** Volunteers participating in Housing Academy are eligible for a \$250 stipend at the close of Housing Academy. Please do not include these stipends in the project budget; stipends will be paid to grantees in a separate process. Paid municipal staff are invited to participate in Housing Academy but are not eligible for these stipends.

All applications must include a letter of support from the Planning Board and local governing body.

Scope of Work and Budget

List and describe the tasks, milestones, and final work products that comprise the project, together with a timetable for task completion. Details for each task shall include:

- Name of task;
- Who will perform the task;
- Milestones and timetable for task completion;
- Brief summary of the task, including anticipated final work products; and
- All project partners and their roles.

Applicants are required to use the budget template provided at www.NHHOPgrants.org. The budget shall include consultant time, consultant-led community engagement, other community engagement, and admin. Budget amounts must be substantiated. Applicants are strongly encouraged to consult with a professional on the budget and timeline to ensure the proposed project is reasonable. Strong applications will include a commitment from a consultant or evidence that a consultant supported the development of the budget and timeline.

Administration costs will consist of 5% of the total grant request and will be automatically calculated. Administration costs are intended to support costs incurred by the municipality, including printing, copying, mileage, and staff time that is directly related to administration of the HOP grant. No documentation is required for the administrative costs and the administrative costs will be paid to the municipality at the close of the grant. Administrative costs are not to be paid to the consultant. Requests of up to \$100,000, including administration, are permitted.

Inquiries and Application Submission

Submit applications as a PDF to info@NHHOPgrants.org. Questions regarding the grant program may be submitted to info@NHHOPgrants.org.

SECTION 5: Reporting and Funds Disbursement

Monthly Reporting

As a condition of selection as a HOP Grant Program grantee, municipalities must submit a monthly report by the 10th of each month using the monthly reporting form available at www.NHHopGrants.org documenting 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. Monthly reports must be submitted by the grantee, and not the consultant.

Failure to submit timely, substantive reports may result in delay in payment of reimbursement requests.

Monthly reports should include handouts, flyers, photographs, surveys and survey results, draft ordinances, and more. Monthly reports must include any drafts of any proposed regulations for the purpose of allowing NH Housing to comment on the draft prior to any public hearings.

The monthly report form can be found at www.NHHopGrants.org/forms.

Final Grant Reporting and Deliverables

No later than 30 days following the project completion date, the grantee will submit a final report using the final reporting form available at www.NHHopGrants.org. If the project includes regulatory development, grantees will be required to report on progress related to implementation, including permitting and development activity under the regulations for a period of three years after completion date.

Expected 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; and
- A plan to move forward with regulatory change, incentives, or other means to increase housing supply and affordability.

The final reporting form can be found at www.NHHopGrants.org/forms.

Disbursement of Grant Funds

Funds awarded from the HOP Grant Program will be disbursed for services rendered. Invoices may be submitted to info@NHHOPgrants.org. Invoices will be paid to the municipality generally within 45 business days. Missing or incomplete documentation supporting reimbursement request will result in the delay in processing until complete. Funds awarded from the HOP Grant Program must be expended by September 30, 2026, after which reimbursement requests will no longer be accepted.

Application Checklist

- Cover page:
 - Name of municipality and address of town hall or governing body.
 - Project contact person's name, affiliation with community, phone number, and email address.
 - An alternate contact person's name, affiliation with community, phone number, and email address.
 - Date of the most recent Master Plan and section(s) of the Master Plan that support this project.
 - One to two sentences about your community, as background for the Steering Committee.
 - Unique Entity Identifier (UEI).
 - Dated signature of municipality's chief executive officer or other authorized representative of the local governing body.
 - Meeting minutes, if applicable. Submissions from the planning board should be signed and dated by the board chair and include an attachment of the minutes of the meeting at which the planning board authorized the grant application.
- Application narrative:
 - Housing Challenges and Project Goals (maximum 750 words)
 - Outcomes and Deliverables (maximum 500 words)
 - Readiness (maximum 500 words)
 - Including relevant, optional attachments or links.
 - Consistency with Local or Regional Plans (maximum 250 words)
 - Community Engagement Plan (maximum 500 words)
- List of potential Housing Academy participants, including their role, email address, and phone number.
- Letter of support from the planning board and local governing body.
- Scope of work including name of task, who will perform the task, milestones and timetable for task completion, brief summary of the task, including anticipated final work products, and a list of all project partners and the role.
- Completed budget template.
- Letter of commitment from the consultant if a consultant has been identified.