



January 30, 2026

Her Excellency, Governor Kelly A. Ayotte
Office of the Governor

The Honorable Sherman Packard
Speaker of the NH House of Representatives

The Honorable Sharon Carson
President of the Senate

State House
Concord, NH 03301

Re: New Hampshire Housing Champion Designation Program – Annual Report

INFORMATIONAL ITEM

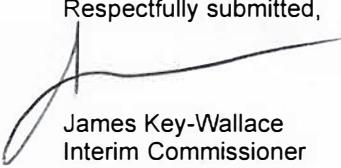
Pursuant to RSA 12-O:71, VII, the Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA) shall develop a report which describes all actions taken related to the operation of the New Hampshire housing champion designation program in the preceding state fiscal year and assesses the overall impact of the New Hampshire housing champion designation program, including an assessment of the additional housing units produced in the state as a result of the program's operation and incentives.

In accordance with this statute, BEA is pleased to submit the enclosed Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2024. This report describes program implementation, municipal participation, incentives awarded, and the program's role in supporting local efforts to increase housing supply across the state.

The Housing Champion Designation Program recognizes and incentivizes municipalities that undertake meaningful regulatory and planning reforms to expand housing opportunities. The enclosed report provides an overview of those efforts and documents measurable progress toward addressing New Hampshire's housing needs.

Please let us know if we can provide any additional information or further detail regarding the program or its outcomes.

Respectfully submitted,


James Key-Wallace
Interim Commissioner

Housing Champion Designation & Grant Program

Department Impact Report

Reporting Period: July 2023 – June 2024

Executive Summary

The New Hampshire Legislature established the Housing Champion Designation and Grant Program (RSA 12-O:71–76) with a \$5 million investment to support municipalities in expanding the supply of workforce housing and the infrastructure needed to sustain it. The program enables communities to voluntarily pursue a Housing Champion designation and in doing so, gain access to targeted planning, production, and infrastructure resources.

Administered by the New Hampshire Department of Business and Economic Affairs (BEA), the Housing Champion Program aligns local land-use reform, infrastructure readiness, and municipal capacity with state housing objectives. During its initial implementation period, the program focused on establishing a clear regulatory framework, engaging municipal partners, and launching grant mechanisms that reward progress in housing production and readiness. The first year of implementation reflects steady progress in building a statewide platform that supports municipal action, encourages regulatory modernization, and directs state resources toward communities actively preparing for housing growth.

Program Overview

Purpose

The Housing Champion Program is designed to incentivize municipalities to accelerate the approval and development of workforce housing while strengthening supporting infrastructure. Municipalities that earn Housing Champion designation receive preferential access to state resources, including discretionary infrastructure funding and eligibility for Housing Production and Housing Infrastructure Municipal Grant and Loan Programs administered by BEA. The program emphasizes local leadership, regulatory readiness, infrastructure capacity, and coordination across planning, transportation, and utility systems to ensure that housing development is both feasible and sustainable.

Program Structure

Housing Champion Designation

The designation recognizes municipalities that demonstrate readiness for housing growth across six categories, four of which are required:

- Adoption of land-use regulations that support housing development
- Training and capacity-building for local land-use board members
- Implementation or planning of water and sewer infrastructure
- Transportation and walkability improvements
- Financial incentives that support housing development
- Other supporting activities that advance local housing goals

Municipalities without zoning are not excluded from participation. Additional scoring flexibility is provided for communities with populations under 10,000, ensuring that rural and small communities can compete equitably for designation.

Grant and Funding Programs

The Housing Champion framework includes four complementary funding tools that support municipalities at different stages of housing readiness and production.

Housing Planning and Regulation Municipal Grants (HPRM)

HPRM grants support third-party planning and technical services that help municipalities establish, modernize, or revise land-use regulations. These grants assist communities in preparing for Housing Champion designation by strengthening zoning, development review processes, and regulatory frameworks.

Housing Production Municipal Grants (HPM)

HPM grants provide per-unit recognition funding based on the prior fiscal year's certificates of occupancy for deed-restricted workforce housing. These grants reward municipalities that demonstrate measurable housing production outcomes, subject to available funding.

Housing Infrastructure Municipal Grants (HIM)

HIM grants support new construction or capacity expansion for infrastructure systems that directly enable housing development, including:

- Water and sewer

- Stormwater systems
- Highways and transportation
- Telecommunications
- Electrical distribution

Projects require a 25 percent municipal match, reinforcing local commitment while leveraging state investment.

Housing Infrastructure Municipal Loans

The loan component of the HIM program was authorized but not funded during the 2024–2025 period.

Rulemaking and Program Development (2023–2024)

Administrative Rules

Pursuant to RSA 12-O:75, BEA was directed to adopt administrative rules to implement the Housing Champion Program no later than July 1, 2024. During the rulemaking process, BEA coordinated with relevant state agencies to ensure consistency with other infrastructure and funding programs referenced in RSA 12-O:73.

The rulemaking process focused on creating clear, transparent standards for designation, grant eligibility, and administration, while maintaining flexibility for municipalities with diverse capacities and development contexts.

Housing Champion Advisory Committee

An Advisory Committee was established in January 2023 in accordance with RSA 12-O:76 to guide program development. The committee brought together legislative, municipal, housing finance, and planning expertise to inform program rules and implementation.

Advisory Committee Members:

- Rebecca Perkins Kwoka – New Hampshire Senator
- Josh Yokela – New Hampshire House Representative
- Andrew Dorsett – Department of Business and Economic Affairs
- Ben Frost – New Hampshire Housing Finance Authority
- Katherine Easterly Martey – Community Development Finance Authority

- Jesse Rounds – New Hampshire Municipal Association
- David Sharples – New Hampshire Municipal Association
- Jennifer Czysz – New Hampshire Regional Planning Commission
- Shanna Saunders – New Hampshire Planning Association

The committee met between January and March 2024 to prepare and refine the HC500 administrative rules. BEA staff subsequently advanced the rules through formal review and preparation for adoption by the Joint Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules (JLCAR) in July 2024.

Implementation Progress

During the initial implementation period, BEA focused on establishing the operational foundation of the Housing Champion Program, including:

- Creating standardized designation criteria
- Developing grant program guidance and administration procedures
- Coordinating across state agencies to align infrastructure and housing funding
- Providing municipalities with a clear pathway from planning to production

These efforts positioned the Housing Champion Program as a practical tool for municipalities seeking to modernize land-use practices, invest in infrastructure capacity, and support workforce housing development in a coordinated manner.

Conclusion

The Housing Champion Designation and Grant Program represents a strategic investment in New Hampshire's municipal capacity to support housing growth. By linking regulatory readiness, infrastructure investment, and production incentives, the program creates a consistent framework for communities to translate planning into measurable housing outcomes.

The program's first year reflects steady progress in building partnerships with municipalities, establishing transparent administrative systems, and aligning state resources with local housing objectives. As implementation continues, the Housing Champion Program will remain a key mechanism for supporting housing supply, infrastructure readiness, and long-term economic vitality across New Hampshire communities.