

September 12th, 2024 Meeting Minutes

10:00 am - 12:00 pm EST

In-person: 365 Boston Rd # G03, Billerica, MA 01821

**Voting members in attendance:**

Kristel Bennett, Billerica

Shannon Gillis, Tewksbury

Angela Lemire, Tyngsborough

**Non-voting members in attendance:**

Shelagh Collins, Billerica

Cynthia Baker, BME Strategies

Haleigh Schultz, BME Strategies

Siobhan LaFreniere, Regional Public Health Specialist

**Voting members absent:**

Kerri Oun, Tyngsborough

Donna Greenwood, Chelmsford

## **I. Opening**

3/4 voting members present, quorum was met.

**Motion to start the meeting**

Kristel Bennett made a motion to start the meeting. Shannon Gillis seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: N/A

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Y

**All in favor.**

Cynthia Baker called the meeting to order at 10:06 am.

**Approval of previous meeting minutes**

Kristel Bennett motioned to approve the July 2024 Coalition Meeting minutes. Shannon Gillis seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: N/A

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Y

**All in favor.**

## II. Announcements & Reminders

### A. Training Dates Recap

Cynthia Baker outlined Hoarding Training dates scheduled for 1/14 and 1/21. These will be all-day, virtual meetings. Towns are encouraged to invite other folks or departments who collaborate on hoarding cases, such as Hoarding Task Forces and COAs. There is a cap of 50 total participants.

The group decided to hold the Housing Court training session with Paul Halfmann on Tuesday, October 29th from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm. The session will take place in person in Billerica, and will serve as a high-level training to help towns prepare for housing cases, housing court, administrative warrants, condemnations, and cases related to Title 5. There is no participant cap, so towns are encouraged to extend the invite to all who may be interested. Closer to the training, Cynthia will send out a headcount request to ensure adequate space is reserved.

### B. Fall Training Hub Courses

Applications for Tier 2 Housing and Food Protection Training Hub courses are due Monday, September 16th by 11:00am. Participants will be notified by the week of September 30th. There is no fee associated with courses, though all registrants must enroll in and complete prerequisites. Food Protection prereqs, specifically around the FDA standards pre-course work, have been reduced.

Upcoming Fall Training Hub Courses include:

- Housing (In-Person): Tuesday, November 12th, 8:00 am - 3:30 pm at the Marriott Hotel in Springfield
- Housing (Virtual): November 20th, November 21st, and December 4th from 8:30 am - 12:30 pm
- Food Protection (In-Person): Wednesday, October 23rd and Thursday, October 24th, 8:00 am - 3:30 pm at the New Bedford Health Department
- Food Protection (Virtual): October 15th, October 16th, and October 17th from 8:30 am - 12:30 pm

The FDA is sunsetting ComplianceWire on September 15th. All modules are migrating to [LearnEd](#). Those who have completed their prerequisites on ComplianceWire will need to download their certificates and transition to LearnED.

### C. RS & CHO Renewal

Registered Sanitarian and Certified Health Officer credentials expire on December 31st. The renewal period starts October 1st and runs through January 15th. To renew, log onto the Health Professions

Licensing Portal and submit an online renewal application. 12 contact hours of CEUs are required for renewal.

D. Proposed IMA Amendment

The proposed IMA amendment de-identifies NEPHA Advisory Board voting members to allow for flexibility and future sustainability in the event of staffing changes. The group confirmed that the proposed amendment makes sense. Cynthia Baker proposed a working deadline of October 10th (the next meeting) for signature and execution pending any feedback from town counsel or BOH members. Kristel Bennett noted that Billerica has a new Town Counsel, so she will do her best to facilitate and meet the deadline.

**Motion to provisionally approve the IMA amendment for signature pending BOH feedback from municipalities.**

Kristel Bennett motioned to provisionally approve the IMA amendment. Shannon Gillis seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: N/A

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Y

**All in favor.**

E. Digitization

Cynthia Baker indicated that municipalities received credentials for access to scanned files last week via email from Robin Slabey. Shannon Gillis confirmed the initial review of files, though noted that the scanning quality was lacking for photos, rendering some scans illegible. Angela Lemire agreed. Kat Foster is back in the office and has connected with MRM again to discuss project closeout and next steps. Scans were completed in alignment with image quality outlined in the RFP, though documents with photos, pencil, or non-white backgrounds did not scan correctly. Regular typeface documents scanned correctly. The indexing for documents is currently based on address, rather than scan type. Potential next steps include additional scanning to correct illegible or low-resolution files, as well as further dialing down of indexing. Angela Lemire asked how this will be accomplished, and Cynthia Baker explained the available options for remediation.

Both approaches will require some additional cost, which would entail a budget modification to reallocate funds. Cynthia Baker will send a follow-up email to schedule a brief regroup next week with Billerica, Tewksbury and Tyngsborough to discuss project closeout and next steps in more detail.

September 12th, 2024 Meeting Minutes

F. Community Resource Guide Update

The Community Resource Guide is now live on the NEPHA website, as well as on Tyngsborough's site. Communities are invited to share the resource on their individual websites.

### III. Allowable Expenditure and Request Process Review

A. Review of Allowable Expenditure Guidance

Cynthia Baker shared the FY25 Allowable Expenditure Guidance and highlighted important areas for consideration. The guidance is meant to streamline spending requests and PHE expenditure. Across all categories, definitions of allowable expenses are more specific, with a focus on regional purchases and resources. Another important update is the Travel line item, which is only reimbursable up to Federal GSA rates for either mileage or lodging.

B. Review of Expenditure/Reimbursement Request Form

Cynthia Baker introduced the proposed Expenditure Request Form for review to ensure all requests and expenditures are sufficiently tracked and documented. NEPHA collaborators will submit the form to Tyngsborough and the SSC for review against expenditure guidance. Additional clarification from the Program Coordinator will be requested if needed. The SSC and/or Tyngsborough will notify the requestor and process the expenditure or reimbursement if applicable. Shannon Gillis and Angela Lemire confirmed that the proposed form is straightforward and will improve internal processes.

**Motion to adopt the Expenditure/Reimbursement Request Form as a formal process.**

Kristel Bennett motioned to adopt the Expenditure/Reimbursement Request Form as a formal process. Shannon Gillis seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: N/A

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Y

**All in favor.**

### IV. FY25 Budget Contingencies

C. Working Budget Modification - Training

To allow for greater flexibility and coverage within the Training line item, Cynthia Baker proposed moving \$1,500 from Technology Software and \$1,000 from Travel to Training. The new Training line item total would be \$8,579.07, covering training already paid for and proposed MHOA Conference registrations (\$8,575 total). The three additional Chelmsford MHOA registrations have been submitted for PHE coverage but not yet paid. The group discussed making sure additional training funds remain available to cover the Regional Inspector's MHOA conference registration. Billerica and Tewksbury also have yet to request any training support for FY25. The group also

discussed limitations on future group training opportunities, such as the proposed Title 5 Training. In addition to the above proposed changes, the Relavent license elections can be updated to free up additional funds, as well as further reductions in the Technology Hardware or Nursing Supplies lines.

#### D. Relavent License Election Review

Cynthia Baker shared the current Relavent license elections. The group reviewed elections and opted to remove some office-only seats that are currently underutilized. The proposed removal will free up an additional \$3,300. Cynthia noted that these seats might be re-elected in the event of an FTE hire for the Regional Inspector position. Shannon Gillis and Kristel Bennett confirmed that their respective towns do not need the additional office-only seat. Angela Lemire will report back on the removal of the office-only seat in Tyngsborough, and noted that Kerri Oun suggested that Housing Code Pro may be unnecessary. Cynthia Baker noted that in order for Arielle to have full regional access, each town has to hold at least one full Dedicated Inspector seat, though Arielle does not currently utilize Housing Code Pro.

In addition to reducing office-only seats, the group confirmed three seats for Billerica, one for Tewksbury, one for Tyngsborough, and one regional license for Arielle on FCP and HCP. The group confirmed the realignment of licenses as outlined, pending further confirmation from Angela and the Tyngsborough team.

#### E. Health Communications Review

The group reviewed the Health Communications line item, which currently outlines \$5,000 available in the budget without any further changes. Siobhan LaFreniere received quotes for translating the Community Resource Guide (CRG) into Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese - Simplified, and Haitian Creole. The translation services, in addition to printed magnets and soft cover booklets, would total \$9,066.90. Cynthia Baker confirmed that this is a one-time cost for translation services. Shannon Gillis confirmed that magnets, soft cover booklets, and Spanish translation (totaling ~\$2,300) are top priority areas. Angela Lemire suggested that Portuguese translation may be another priority, depending on available funds. Siobhan LaFreniere noted that with Spanish and Portuguese translation, the format fee would only need to be paid once (\$150). Cynthia Baker noted that towns will need to clarify whether Brazilian Portuguese or Portuguese is needed before pursuing next steps. Angela Lemire noted that additional translation services are a great spend-down option with any leftover funds at the end of the fiscal year. The group confirmed that they would like to move forward with magnets, soft cover booklets, and Spanish translation.

In addition to the CRG, there are several workplan activities that involve translation and interpretation, as outlined on Slide 18.

**Motion to approve proposed budget modification - reallocating \$1500 from Technology Software and \$1000 from Travel to expand the Training budget.**

Kristel Bennett motioned to move funds from Technology Software and Travel to Training. Shannon Gillis seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: N/A

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Y

**All in favor.**

## **V. Inspector JD Review**

Cynthia Baker circulated a copy of the Regional Inspector Job Description (Draft) and opened the discussion by asking where towns need the most support. Kristel Bennett indicated that Billerica would benefit from additional surge support, as well as food safety education. Additional support would free up existing staff members to provide additional education and outreach. Cynthia Baker noted that Chelmsford requested additional help in housing, but if food protection coverage were to increase, Arielle could provide additional housing support. Food protection inspections are more predictable than housing cases which could provide additional stability and capacity for education.

Cynthia Baker asked whether the group would like to pursue hiring a part-time municipal employee (FTE) or a contractor. She noted no further budget bandwidth for additional Title 5 contractor services. Kristel Bennett noted that she completes all Title 5-related inspections in Billerica, which is a huge lift and makes providing support elsewhere difficult. The Town Counsel is less likely to opt for additional contractors (rather than municipal staff). Cynthia Baker noted that other groups use Old Mill Consulting for Title 5 support. She also noted that Donna proposed a dedicated Title 5 training, likely in FY26 when funds and resources are available. The group confirmed that food protection should be the primary focus of the role.

Cynthia Baker proposed a discussion regarding the number of hours per week for the role, starting at 10-15 hours per week. The group agreed that 10-15 hours feels appropriate, but questioned whether the employee would receive benefits under a part-time role designation. Angela Lemire noted that with a range (and fewer hours), it may be harder to hire a municipal employee. She suggested that a contractor role might make more sense. Angela confirmed that a part-time employee may receive some benefits, including sick pay, in Tyngsborough. She also suggested that the position could be posted as a municipal part-time role at 15 hours per week, rather than indicating a range.

Cynthia Baker asked the group what additional information is needed to make a decision regarding the direction of hire. She noted that additional food protection support in Chelmsford would require

onboarding to their inspection system, as Chelmsford does not use Food Code Pro. If the inspector freed up Arielle's time by taking on food protection inspections, Arielle could instead support Chelmsford with housing. Angela Lemire asked whether this person will have a set schedule or be on call, which may impact the determination of an FTE vs. contractor hire. The group agreed that the posting could pitch a specific number of hours, with the potential for additional capacity support as needed. Kristel Bennett expressed interest in discussing further with Chelmsford before making a decision. Cynthia Baker noted that the amount currently budgeted for fringe benefits may also free up additional space in the budget in the event that the group hires a contractor, though the percent of fringe allocation for a part-time role would need to be confirmed by Tyngsborough before moving forward. These funds could be put towards wrapping up the digitization initiative.

**Motion to tentatively reallocate fringe funding (~\$5,000) from the inspector position to finalize digitization project closeout, pending additional conversation with the vendor.**

Kristel Bennett motioned to tentatively reduce fringe funding for the forecasted inspector position to close out digitization efforts. Shannon Gillis seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: N/A

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Y

**All in favor.**

## VI. Communications Plan Outline

### A. FY25 Workplan Objectives

Cynthia Baker reviewed the language outlining workplan components, as described on Slide 22.

### B. Shortlist of items

Cynthia Baker reviewed a shortlist of proposed components for the Communications Plan. The group agreed that this shortlist comprehensively captures the communications need, with no additional proposals or removals. Shortlist items are outlined on Slide 23.

Cynthia Baker asked the group how they typically access information and internal documents. The group confirmed that they prefer to use Microsoft applications, and something like SharePoint would be useful. Angela Lemire confirmed that Tyngsborough often uses Google Drive, but she is more comfortable using Microsoft. She noted that Kerri might prefer Google Drive. Kristel Bennett and Shannon Gillis confirmed their preference for Microsoft. The group will explore pricing and potential options for a shared document hub. Cynthia Baker will start putting together a draft drive structure to move or share in the format/platform of the group's choosing.



**C. Review: Regional Staff Request Form**

Cynthia Baker shared the Regional Staff Request Form, which is intended to formally request support staff and help the group understand staff utilization across the coalition. Folks are able to request support for specific projects. The group proposed clarifying the “date” selection question to include both the date of the event, as well as the date of support or response needed. Cynthia Baker noted that she will update the skip logic to avoid unnecessary questions.

**D. Review: Hiring Process Outline**

The group reviewed the Hiring Process Outline presented in the July meeting. There was no additional feedback or proposed changes.

**Motion to accept the Hiring Process Outline?**

Kristel Bennett motioned to accept and adopt the Hiring Process Outline. Shannon Gillis seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: N/A

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Y

**All in favor.**

## **VII. Community Updates**

The group opted to skip Community Updates due to time.

## **VIII. Adjournment**

The next regular coalition meeting will be held in-person in Tyngsborough on Thursday, October 10th, from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm.

**Motion to adjourn the meeting**

Shannon Gillis motioned to adjourn the meeting. Angela Lemire seconded the motion.

Billerica: Y

Chelmsford: N/A

Tewksbury: Y

Tyngsborough: Y

**All in favor.**

**Meeting adjourned at 12:12 pm.**



**Documents referenced by the public body during the meeting:**

NEPHA July Coalition Meeting Slides  
FY25 Allowable Expenses Guidance  
NEPHA Expenditure/Reimbursement Form  
NEPHA FY25 PHE Budget Modification  
MY25 Relavent Planning Template  
Regional Inspector Job Description  
NEPHA Regional Staff Request Form  
NEPHA Hiring Process Outline

# NEPHA Coalition Meeting



September 12th, 2024



BME STRATEGIES

# Meeting Opening

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# Agenda

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- I. Opening
- II. Announcements & Reminders
- III. Allowable Expenditure and Request Process Review
- IV. FY25 Budget Contingencies
- V. Hiring Process & JD Review
- VI. Communications Plan Outline
- VII. Community Updates
- VIII. Adjournment

Approval of July 2024 meeting minutes

# Announcements and Reminders

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Welcome, Haleigh!

# Announcements and Reminders

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## Training Dates Recap

- Hoarding training series scheduled for 1/14 & 1/21
- Housing court training - date to be confirmed
  - Tuesday, October 22nd **or** Tuesday, October 29th



# Announcements and Reminders

Application  
Deadline:  
9/16 at  
11AM

## MASSACHUSETTS LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH TRAINING PROGRAM

### HOUSING AND FOOD INSPECTION COURSES

*Two great training opportunities  
informed by a collaborative group  
of local public health professionals.*

Boston University will be providing Tier 2 Training Opportunities

#### Housing

*Total Learning Time: 18 hours*

**In Person Date & Time:** (6 hours + Lunch)

Tuesday, Nov. 12th, 2024 at 8am-3:30pm

**Location:** Marriott Hotel in Springfield, MA

**Virtual Dates:** (4 hrs/each)

Nov. 20th, Nov. 21st, and Dec. 4th at 8:30am-12:30pm

#### Food

*Total Learning Time: 24 hours*

**Virtual Dates and Times:** (4 hrs/each)

Oct. 15th, 16th, 17th at 8:30am-12:30pm

**In Person Dates:** (6 hrs/each + Lunch)

Wednesday, Oct. 23rd at 8am-3:30pm

Thursday, Oct. 24th at 8am-3:30pm

**Location:** New Bedford Health Department

# Announcements and Reminders

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## Registered Sanitarian & Certified Health Officer Renewal

- All credentials expire on 12/31/24
- Renewal applications must be completed & submitted online
- To renew, log onto the Health Professions Licensing Portal
  - Renewal period will run 10/1/2024 through 1/15/2025
  - Renewal notices are not sent by mail - confirmation will be sent to the email address on file on the Portal
  - 12 contact hours of CEUs required

# Announcements and Reminders

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## Proposed IMA Amendment

- De-identifies NEPHA Advisory Board voting members and alternates
- Best practice recommendation to promote documentation sustainability in the event of turnover

# Announcements and Reminders

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## Digitization Update

- Credentials for access to scanned files shared via email last week with individual town contacts
- Schedule a brief regroup next week with Billerica, Tewksbury and Tyngsborough to discuss project closeout next steps in more detail

# Announcements and Reminders

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## Community Resource Guide Update

- Live on [NEPHA website!](#)

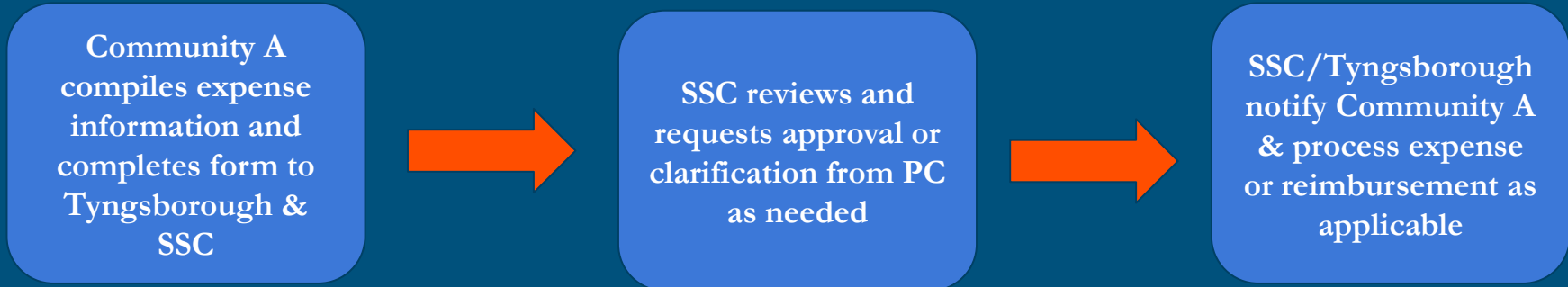
# Allowable Expenditure and Request Process Review

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# Allowable Expenditures and Request Process Review

- Review of Allowable Expenditure Guidance
  - Increased focus on regional purchases/non-supplanting
  - FY25 Travel only reimbursable up to Federal GSA rates
- Review proposed Expenditure Request Form

## Proposed Process Flow





# FY25 Budget Contingencies

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# FY25 Budget Contingencies

- Review Working Budget Modification Draft
  - \$1,500 from Technology Software to Training
  - \$1,000 from Travel to Training

	Original FY25 Budget	Proposed Modification
Technology Software	\$27,000.00	\$25,500.00
Travel	\$3,500.00	\$2,500.00
Training	\$6,069.07	\$8,579.07

Additional factors to confirm further changes:

- Relavent license adjustment
- Inspector hiring approach

# FY25 Budget Contingencies - Training

Confirmed Training Expenses	Cost
Donna Greenwood MHOA Conference	\$550.00
Taryn/Marissa Merrimack Valley Perinatal Health Summit	\$50.00
Siobhan LaFreniere 2024 Merrimack Valley Perinatal Health Summit	\$25.00
NEPHA Hoarding Training	\$4,000.00
Charlene Destrempe MHOA Sept. 2024 Quarterly Meeting	\$50.00
Darcy Beall MHOA Sept. 2024 Quarterly Meeting	\$50.00
Siobhan LaFreniere MHOA Annual Conference	\$550.00
Ashley Pavlakos MHOA Annual Conference	\$650.00
NEPHA Housing Court Training (to be confirmed)	\$1,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$6,925.00</b>

<u>Submitted</u> Training Expenses	Cost
Mark Masiello MHOA Conference	\$550.00
Taryn Angel MHOA Conference	\$550.00
Darcy Beall MHOA Conference	\$550.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,650.00</b>

# FY25 Budget Contingencies - Health Communication

Input	Unit Cost	Quantity	Total
Printed Magnets	\$3.44	100	\$344.00
Softcover Booklet (7 x 8.5, 32 pages)	\$32.75	8	\$262.00
Translation (Spanish)	\$1,755.53	1	\$1,755.53
Translation (Portuguese)	\$2,348.34	1	\$2,348.34
Translation (Chinese - Simplified)	\$1,833.36	1	\$1,833.36
Translation (Haitian Creole)	\$2,523.67	1	\$2,523.67
<b>Forecasted Total</b>	-	-	<b>\$9,066.90</b>

	<b>Original FY25 Budget</b>
<b>Health Communication</b>	\$5,000

# FY25 Budget Contingencies - Health Communication

## Review of Relevant FY25 Workplan Objectives

- Create resource guides for pregnant people, new moms, and guardians. Ensure materials are made available in multiple languages as applicable to the SSA's demographics, and multiple formats and locations for accessibility among different populations (*Elective Objective 1*)
- Develop supporting inspection follow-up and guidance documents for operators and residents in multiple languages as reflects the demographics of the SSA (*Performance Standard Objectives, Housing & Food Protection*)
- Integrate translation and interpretation SOP into the case management and resource referral plan to ensure service continuity to limited English proficiency residents in the SSA (*Performance Standard Objective, Housing*)

# Inspector JD Review

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# Inspector JD Review

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## Discussion Questions

- Which types of inspections are most needed in each community?
- If we hire someone to specialize in Food Protection, could we shift inspector time around in all communities to reallocate/free up additional capacity?
- 0.5 FTE vs. contractor



# Communications Plan Outline

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# Communications Plan Outline

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## FY25 Workplan Objectives

- Develop standardized protocols for inter-municipal communication and collaboration including document sharing, guidelines for response times, and conflict resolution.
- Initiate monthly meetings with SSA shared staff to check-in about workplan activity progress and collaborate on SSA communications plan deliverables.
- Set up feedback mechanisms to gather input from municipalities and shared staff on the effectiveness of the communication and collaboration framework to identify best practices and areas for improvement.
- Develop a streamlined process for municipalities to access and request regional staff to enhance resource-sharing and programmatic support.

# Communications Plan Outline

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## **Shortlist of Proposed Components**

- Hiring Process Outline
- Document Sharing Guidelines and Process
- Outline of Response Times
- Conflict Resolution Method
- Workplan Progress Tracker & Updates
- System for Regional Staff Support Requests
- Feedback Mechanisms

# Communications Plan Outline

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- **Discuss:**
  - Are there any other components missing from our Comms Plan outline that you would like to see?
  - Document Sharing Guidelines and Process - how does each community like to access information?
- **Review:** Regional Staff Request Form & Hiring Process Outline

# Community Updates

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# Meeting Adjournment

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## **Next Meeting**

Currently scheduled for Thursday, October 10th

11AM-2PM

*Who would like to host?*