

**Exhibit E**  
**Capacity**

**Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments**

## **What capacity do you and your Partner(s) have? What is your staffing plan?**

This application was written by Megan Jouflas, Deputy Director of the Lower Connecticut River Valley Council of Governments (RiverCOG). RiverCOG will act as the lead agency for implementation of the proposed project and will oversee the consultant and partner team. Partners for this project will include the seventeen member municipalities of the Lower Connecticut River Valley region, specifically those where the six selected opportunity sites are located. It is anticipated that between three and four consultants will be brought onboard to allow for concurrent progress on different components of the project scope.

### Relevant Experience and Leadership Capacity.

*Project Management.* RiverCOG regularly oversees complex projects for the region. The Regional Housing Plan in particular involved the oversight of a three-consultant team to create a first of its kind housing plan for the state with a regional component and 14 municipal components. The timing of this project was complex because it required in tandem regional and municipal public engagement, ensuring that each local hearing and adoption process was followed so that all components could be adopted concurrently. In addition, RiverCOG is managing another complex project in the Thriving Communities Program. This project involves the coordination of a four-municipality, one non-profit, multi-consultant team to create a four-part transit-oriented development plan for the region. Similar to the Regional Housing Plan, this plan will require adoption of each sub-part by the municipality and the region will adopt the plan in its entirety.

*Team Coordination.* RiverCOG has a long and successful history of regional cooperation and has worked collaboratively on a broad range of planning endeavors, including housing, conservation, transportation, and economic development. Recent work includes the GrowSmart Regional Economic Strategic Plan (2016), Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan (2020), Regional Plan of Conservation and Development (2021), Regional Housing Plan (2022), Metropolitan Transportation Plan (2023), and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (2023). All of these plans involved facilitating coordination among the region's municipalities and have garnered a great degree of trust and respect for RiverCOG as a project leader.

*Grant management.* RiverCOG currently manages sixteen concurrent federal and state grants ranging in size from \$6,000 to \$550,000 alongside five other long-term agency projects that average about \$518,000 annually. Recently, RiverCOG successfully managed the completion of four concurrent projects, including adoption of the region's first Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), as a subrecipient of federal CARES Act funding. In addition, RiverCOG's grant management capacity was recently evaluated as a direct recipient of a federal Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) grant and found to pose no risk.

Legal Authority. The RiverCOG Board is comprised of the chief elected and executive officials of the seventeen towns in the Lower Connecticut River Valley region. The Board has the authority to adopt high level plans to guide land use and transportation decisions in the region. The plans adopted by the RiverCOG Board are advisory, however, and implementation measures fall largely to the individual municipalities and their planning and zoning commissions. Nonetheless, if a plan is adopted by the RiverCOG Board, it typically has the support of the municipality's governing

body and is created with significant input from the relevant land use commissions. This proposal, similarly, would involve regular working group sessions with municipal stakeholders to ensure support. In addition, while this effort would be led regionally to utilize economies of scale and ensure coordination, the municipality would ultimately be responsible for adopting the area specific plan. RiverCOG has had previous success with this format in the Regional Housing Plan. For that project, the RiverCOG Board adopted the plan in its entirety and each municipality adopted its own Affordable Housing Plan section.

Partnerships. RiverCOG will partner with the region's municipalities in carrying out the proposed project activities, as it has done in its previous planning efforts. Land use commissions of the partner municipalities and associated staff, where applicable, will be regularly engaged throughout the project. Where partner municipalities do not have planning staff, RiverCOG will step in to facilitate coordination with the land use commissions. This supplemental staff role is one that RiverCOG has taken in the past to facilitate projects in understaffed municipalities. Lack of planning staff will not deter completion of the proposed project activities. In addition, the RiverCOG Board, which represents the region's municipalities, voted unanimously in support of pursuing this grant opportunity. RiverCOG has secured the commitment and cooperation of the municipalities in moving the proposed activities forward.

Staff Capacity. RiverCOG employs ten full time staff members that specialize in a variety of fields, including transportation, environmental planning, mapping and data analysis, community outreach, and economic development. There is currently a vacant position for a full-time regional planner that would be filled prior to the start of the grant. RiverCOG's organizational structure is lateral, with the Executive Director and Deputy Director overseeing all projects and operations and remaining staff overseeing work in their relevant fields. For the PRO Housing grant, funding would be managed by RiverCOG's Financial Administrator and the Deputy Director would serve as project manager. All RiverCOG staff would be utilized for work on PRO Housing activities that relate to their subject matter specialties. The following organizational chart provides a breakdown of key staff expected to work on the proposed project.

