

# A Year of Strength



## The 2016-2017 Annual Report

New York State Rural Housing Coalition, Inc

79 North Pearl Street, Albany, NY 12207

[www.ruralhousing.org](http://www.ruralhousing.org)

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## A Message from the Acting Executive Director

The 2016-17 program year of the Rural Housing Coalition was filled with fascinating questions, exciting new projects, and overall positive financial outcomes. I want to thank all of our supporters, including New York State Homes and Community Renewal, our Conference Sponsors, our members, and our grantors for making the past year possible. None of our activities in support of local housing and community development programs and projects would be possible without each of you having ongoing confidence in our work, and your investment in the well-being of the rural housing and community development agencies in New York.

During this past year, the Coalition has continued to operate with a skeleton staff of two. With such a small staff, fulfilling our mission would be impossible without being able to rely on technology. Lorraine Wynne has been working diligently for a couple of years to upgrade our computer hardware package, and I believe that effort is now complete. We have successfully transitioned our server to the cloud, upgraded software, and changed hosts for our web presence. This has given us the ability to manage most of our internet presence in-house, reducing costs and allowing us to keep our sites current.

On the financial front, we were able to zero out our line of credit, as well as modify unemployment insurance account to free up excess capital. That capital helped pay for some of the computer expenses, with the balance being placed in a rainy day fund for future needs.

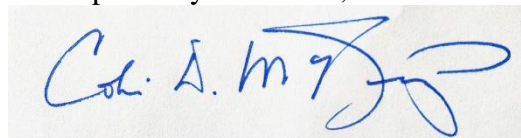
Our training events went off successfully again this year. In September, 2016, we held our annual training conference for the third year in Oswego. We also completed a series of peer to peer trainings for RPCs during the spring of 2017 in Corning, Voorheesville, Hamden, and Oswego. We provided direct training via Skype for a board of directors in central New York over the course of the year.

We provided technical assistance services to housing agencies across the state. This assistance included responding to questions about housing rehab programs, developing housing counseling and first time homebuyer programs, developing strategies for Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities, annual reporting requirements, CHDO development proposals, revitalization of Section 515 projects, succession planning, zoning, rental policies, human resources, grant writing strategies, and a regional collaboration model for housing rehab and community revitalization. We also reviewed potential new development and redevelopment ideas for feasibility. In addition, we also conducted several Executive Director retreats, and at least three new Executive Director orientations.

As a new initiative, the Coalition applied for, and was approved to receive 10 VISTA volunteers to be out-placed at RPCs across the state. Following a rather frustrating and lengthy recruitment process, we were able to bring on 2 VISTAs to serve at RUPCo in Kingston, and at Sheen Housing in Bloomfield.

All in all, it's been a busy year, but the Coalition is energized to continue to work on behalf of rural New York's residents.

Respectfully submitted,



Acting Executive Director

## Fulfilling Contracts

One of the primary activities of the Rural Housing Coalition is to support the development and efficacy of the network of Rural Preservation Companies under contract with the State of New York. We provide training and direct technical assistance to enable RPCs to access new funding, begin new projects and programs, and in many cases do more with less. The impact of our contract for these services has eroded over time simply due to inflation, and during the 2016-17 year it became apparent that this work needed additional support. We were able to secure additional support for this work through a grant from the John Ben Snow Foundation. This additional layer of support have become critically important in our ability to achieve the Coalition's mission.

The Coalition's contract with HCR contains three key elements: direct technical assistance services to work with RPC staff on specific concerns, projects, or capacity development; training workshops to keep RPCs up to date on the latest innovations in the industry; and development of content for inclusion in a report to the state legislature on the impact of the RPC program.

Our direct technical assistance services generally work one on one with the leadership of RPCs to resolve technical concerns, devise creative strategies for dealing with new community development challenges, address staffing and succession issues, assist with strategic planning efforts, addressing loan to value challenges faced in implementing rehab and homebuyer grant programs, APR and contract submission issues, and In total, technical assistance was provided under this contract to 37 Rural Preservation Companies during this program year.

The Coalition operates an active training program to bring together RPC staff, provide opportunities to network, and learn about advances in the affordable housing and community development industry. The primary training activity of the Coalition is our fall conference, which was held for the third year in Oswego on September 14-16. The HCR contract supported several workshops at the conference as it is the best opportunity to make training available to the broadest audience each year. Highlights of the event included workshops on the Community Investment Fund, a certification training by USDA on Section 502 loan packaging, and a presentation by HCR Commissioner Jamie Rubin.

In addition to the conference, the Coalition organizes a series of peer trainings that organize the RPCs regionally. This year, the Peer to Peer trainings were held in Corning, hosted by Arbor Housing and Development, in Hamden, hosted by Delaware Opportunities, in Oswego, hosted by Oswego Housing Development Council, and in Voorheesville, hosted by Albany County Rural Housing Alliance.

This year, the Coalition developed four RPC project profiles for inclusion in the report to the legislature. Every effort is made in project selection to avoid re-profiling an RPC that has been featured in the report in the past. The goal is to show, over a period of years, the breadth of

creativity across the network, and the range of challenges being solved in rural New York's diverse communities.

One of the projects profiled in this year's annual report was the completed Preservation Initiative project of ROUSE, RPC in West Sand Lake, NY. This project updated a 20+ year old Turnkey Senior Housing project. Another profile included in the report detailed the Disaster Response family rental project developed by SEPP, Inc. in Broome County. This project provides rental housing to replace units lost during flooding in Binghamton. Another profile showcased Pathstone's work in converting two manufactured home parks to cooperative ownership. The fourth profile detailed the planned renovations and complex financing of two deteriorated properties in the Village of Dundee for use as permanent housing for the homeless by the Keuka Housing Council. This project will be re-profiled next year, once the construction is completed.

In addition to the HCR Technical Assistance contract, we also were awarded a consulting contract to participate as training staff in the 2017 Main Street Boot Camp program in Andes, New York.

### 1) Success Stories

We assisted an RPC in central New York to submit an application to New York's nonprofit revitalization program to increase the efficiency of a program to provide handicapped ramps to the disabled. This program is administered in partnership with the County. The application was ultimately funded this year, and will allow the RPC to control staffing costs for the program in the future.

### 2) Site Visits to RPCs

New York's Rural Preservation Companies remain a core constituency for the Coalition. Recognizing that our services are best delivered face-to-face, a conscious decision was made to continue to visit each of the nearly 59 RPCs across the state. While that goal proved ambitious, we made some serious headway towards our goal, making an appearance at the offices of 9 more of the preservation companies all across the state. This effort will continue.

### 3) Grants Received

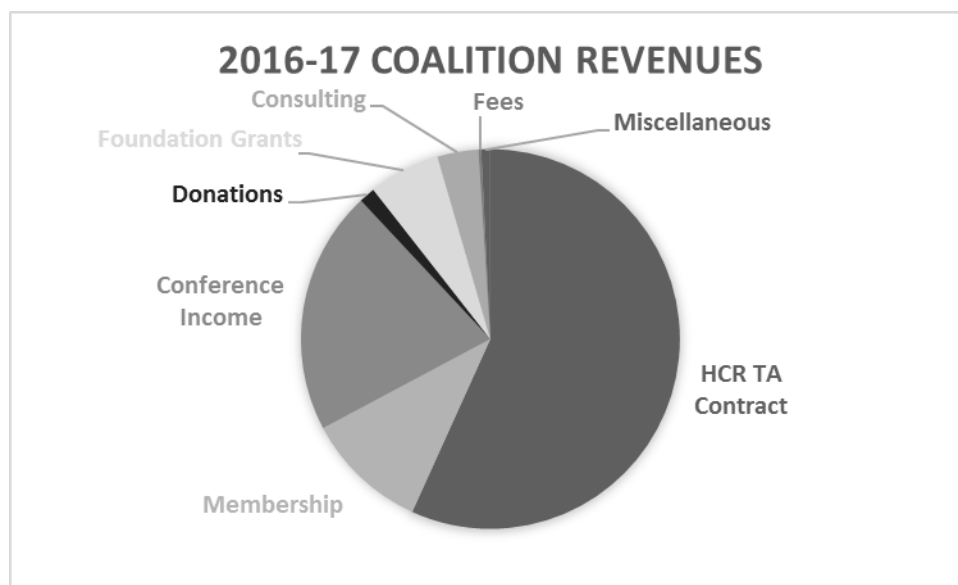
In order to supplement our technical assistance contracts, the Coalition has pursued philanthropic and corporate funding sources since summer, 2016. We are pleased that we have been able to secure a number of grant awards to support our ongoing work. We are extremely pleased that we have subsequently received grants from the John Ben Snow Foundation and TD Bank and First Niagara Bank to continue our work in the coming year.

#### 4) Program Development

The Coalition submitted an application this year to the Corporation for National and Community Service. This application was approved to provide a total of 10 VISTA volunteers to RPCs around the state. After 5 months of active recruitment, only 2 VISTAs were secured. They are currently working on projects to further the mission of their host RPCs, including fundraising efforts and public relations activities. In addition to helping the host agencies do more good work, this project is envisioned as a strategy to introduce more young professionals to the career options available in the field of affordable housing and community development in rural New York.

#### 5) Fiscal Management

The financial accounts of the Rural Housing Coalition were audited by staff of EFPR Group, CPAs in August, 2017, and the audit report is scheduled to be presented to the board of directors on September 13, 2017.



#### 6) Partnerships

The Coalition is a member of both the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC), the National Rural Housing Coalition (NRHC), and the National Community Reinvestment Coalition (NCRC). These partnerships at the federal level allow us to bring issues from rural New York to the attention of policy makers at the national level. In addition, we can support the efforts of the national organizations when they are working on New York-specific issues. As an example, thanks to the efforts of NCRC, Key Bank now has a working advisory group in the Capitol Region to provide input on unmet banking needs in the community. Lorraine Wynne represents the Rural

Housing Coalition on this advisory group. Colin McKnight represents the Coalition on the Community Advisory Committee of the Federal Home Loan Bank of NY.

## 7) Technology

The Coalition has long struggled to keep abreast of the ever-changing world of office technology. This year, we completed the process of moving our server operation to the cloud, saving a significant investment in hardware. We also replaced workstations as necessary to maintain operations, and are now well-positioned to move forward without annoying delays or system outages. In the course of completing this work, we moved our website hosting to an in-state company, and have a new local IT consultant.

At the June meeting of the Board of Directors, an ad hoc committee was formed to improve the effectiveness of the Coalition's presence on social media platforms. This committee has acted quickly to devise new social media platforms to engage the membership and leadership of the RPCs, and to ensure that our website is current and continually updated. This has resulted in enabling staff to make site updates internally.