

COMMUNITY HOUSING COUNCIL OF SA INC

REGIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE MODEL

WORKING PARTY – ESTABLISHMENT AND TERMS OF REFERENCE

1. Introduction

Work over a period of years has established that the business of running a CHO can be onerous and time-consuming. Excessive workloads can lead to burnout of volunteers and can threaten viability. Larger CHOs have generally been able to engage paid staff to carry out essential management functions. Some unstaffed CHOs have opted to employ paid service providers. Others rely exclusively on volunteers, usually but not exclusively from within their own ranks.

One solution to the challenges of running small unstaffed CHOs is to develop regional infrastructure networks. These would be networks of CHOs purchasing essential administrative services from a Service Provider Organisation (SPO). The SPO could either be an existing larger CHO or a new organisation set up for that purpose. As well as the benefit of administrative support, participating CHOs would benefit from ongoing interactions with other CHOs in their region. Participating CHOs would support and learn from each other in a wide range of areas. The SPO could offer shared facilities, so the SPO's offices could become a regional hub if participating CHOs decided they wanted this development.

The SPO would assume as much or as little of the administrative work of the CHO as the CHO desired. The CHO retains complete control over its own affairs and makes all decisions concerning asset management and tenancy management.

The development of a regional infrastructure model was considered in depth at a forum organised by the CHCSA on 15th April 2005. The forum was attended by over 60 people from a range of CHOs as well as CHCSA, SACHA and Comhouse. As well as hearing presentations by CHCSA staff and Mike Newbigin from Western Australia, the forum broke up into 8 small groups which considered various aspects of regional networking in depth. This illustrated that there are numerous questions to be answered before a functioning regional network could be established.

The small group on implementation reported that a Pilot Project would be needed and that a Working Party would be needed to scope out the parameters for a Pilot Project.

Although a key element of the Pilot Project will be to estimate the real cost of providing such a service, it would be desirable to ensure that funding issues do not stand in the way of the pilot. Providing a seeding grant to the successful SPO would be one way of ensuring that the project gets off the ground, allowing us to assess the non-financial costs and benefits to the SPO and participating CHOs. For this reason, it is likely that an approach will need to be made to SACHA for a seeding grant for a defined time period, say one to two years.

This paper therefore considers the establishment of such a Working Party and in particular considers the following aspects :

- Composition of the Working Party
- Selection of the Working Party
- Terms of Reference
- Timeline
- Outcomes

Composition of the Working Party

It is proposed that the Working Party comprise the following nine people :

- CHCSA staff member
- Nominee of CHCSA Policy Committee
- 2 housing co-operative representatives
- 2 housing associations representatives
- SACHA representative

However should other CHOs wish to participate, they could be given observer status.

Selection of the Working Party

It is proposed that the Working Party be selected as follows :

Member	Method
CHCSA staff member	Nominated by CHCSA EO
Nominee of CHCSA Policy Committee	Nominated by Policy Committee
2 housing co-operative representatives	Through CHCSA e-newsletter, Co-op Representative Council, and regional forums.
2 housing associations representatives	Through CHCSA e-newsletter, Associations Forum and Disability Focus Group
SACHA representative	Nominated by SACHA following letter of invite

Terms of Reference

The proposed Terms of Reference for the Working Party are to design a brief addressing the following parameters :

Selection of SPO

- Eligibility criteria for selection as the pilot SPO
- How Expressions of Interest will be called eg public tender; selective tender
- Method by which a pilot SPO will be selected

Budget and Financial Issues

- A budget, including estimation of fees and charges and estimation of any seeding grants required
- Staffing requirements
- Pricing issues
- The impact on the budgets of participating CHOs
- Viability of the new Funding Agreement for supporting the SPO model
- Minimum number required to ensure viability

Determination of SPO Model

- Determination of geographic region and number of CHOs to be served
- Identify suitable models for an SPO eg should it be a current CHO; a holding company of a CHO; a new entity controlled by the participants; a non-CHO body; or what ?

SPO/CHO Functions

- Determination of respective roles of SPO and participating CHOs
- Role of the SPO in fostering the viability of housing co-operatives and small housing associations and related networking activities
- Services to be offered eg financial, administrative, infrastructure

Regional Networking

- Features of the regional networking which will accompany service provision
- How the SPO can assist in developing regional networks between participating CHOs

Administrative Issues

- IT requirements including software
- Intra-SPO infrastructure requirements ie office space, telephones etc
- Identification of potential clients of the SPO and selection criteria for potential clients

Management Issues

- How the project will be managed and evaluated and parameters of an evaluation
- Timeline for the Pilot Project
- Establish minimum time period for which contracts should be entered into between SPO and clients
- An exit strategy for clients in the event the pilot does not lead to establishment of a permanent solution
- Where the Pilot Project will be located and which region or regions it will serve

Of course, the Working Party will be able to adapt and expand these Terms of Reference as it develops.

Timelines

The following timelines are proposed :

Date to be completed by	Item to be completed by that date
15 th July 2005	Terms of Reference etc endorsed by Policy Committee
15 th August 2005	Working Party agreed
31 st August 2005	First meeting held
14 th October 2005	First draft of proposal for a Pilot Project ready
11 th November 2005	Open workshop on proposal for a Pilot Project (Or should it just do the rounds of the monthly forums ?)
25 th November 2005	Final proposal for a Pilot Project submitted to SACHA

Outcomes of the Working Party

It is anticipated that the principal outcome of the Working Party will be a properly costed proposal for a Pilot Project, including a detailed brief as outlined above.