



AMS Housing Service Feasibility Study

2020/2021

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Executive Summary

Provided below is an executive summary of the contents of this feasibility report.

This report was submitted to AMS Council on September 25th, 2020.

Overview

Both the university and the AMS previously operated housing databases and ancillary services aimed at supporting students in their off-campus needs. Over time, these services have become watered down and defunct. At present, no adequate supports exist within the university nor the AMS in supporting students with off-campus housing needs.

A feasibility study done in 2014 considered the creation of an AMS Housing Service, however, it concluded that it was not feasible for the AMS to run. It was concluded that the AMS should focus instead on lobbying the university to create a professional service. However, as of 2020, no professional office has been created in the last six years since this lobbying began.

Over the past several years, many surveys have been conducted that asked key questions about the state of off-campus supports and experiences of students. The data has shown that students are in favour of creating an AMS-run housing service that supports students with off-campus housing needs. Additional student consultation done for this study further indicates the need for adequate supports for off-campus student housing support services.

Different models of both professional and student-run off-campus support services at different institutions were researched. Other institutions with less resources than the AMS have succeeded in creating adequate off-campus housing support services.

The AMS is in a position to create an initial volunteer-run service that provides:

- Off-campus housing support through housing search assistance using existing off-campus services;
- Landlord and roommate dispute, negotiation, and conflict mediation services; and
- Informational campaign and outreach services aimed at education around tenancy rights.

Future aspects of the AMS Housing Service could include:

- Homelessness prevention and alleviation services;
- Rental services; and
- A property management service.

The proposed AMS Housing Service can be largely volunteer run to mitigate costs to the society.

Final Recommendation

The AMS pursue the creation of a Student Service geared towards off-campus housing support for students, following the initial implementation provided in this report.

Sincerely,



Mitchell Prost
AMS Housing Service Coordinator

Background

In this section, a history of off-campus housing services and supports provided both by the AMS and by the university is provided.

Historical Context

A potential housing service is not a novel concept for the AMS. In previous years, there have been services operated by the AMS to address the student demand for off-campus housing support. The most notable example is AMS Rentsline. This service started as an automated teleregistry of off-campus housing listings that was accessible to students. Landlords could call in to place ads and students could call in to see them. For a while, this service existed as an official Student Service, but eventually ceased to be an official Service. This registry continued to exist on the AMS website for a period of time.

In 2013, the AMS Services Review concluded that Rentsline, though actively updated and utilized, did not provide enough support to users. By September 2014 the AMS had discontinued its connection to Rentsline, which continued to operate under the control of the company that had partnered with the AMS on it. Also in September 2014, Council was informed that the university had created an off-campus housing website. Currently, the university still has an off-campus housing website with a link to the new non-AMS Rentsline. Rentsline still exists, but the AMS is no longer connected to it.

In 2014, the Student Services Manager at the time was directed to create a feasibility study for an AMS Housing Service. The Student Services Manager presented four options, all of which were deemed unfeasible. The AMS decided to instead shift focus from creating a student-run service to lobby the university to create a professional service centered around off-campus housing. No professional service was created, instead, a webpage was created on UBC’s Student Housing website with off-campus housing information and resources. Table 1 provides a breakdown of the AMS’s history with housing services.

Table 1. A History of AMS Rentsline and Potential AMS Housing Services

Date	Event
July 1993	Council approved a proposal “to install and operate an automated housing registry, for use by UBC students to secure off-campus accommodation.”
Mid-1990s	Rentsline becomes an AMS Student Service.
Early 2000s	Rentsline ceases to be a Service, but is still maintained as an automatic registry on the AMS website.
August 2013	<p>Statement from the 2013 AMS Services Review:</p> <p>“While Rentsline is actively updated and utilized, it does not provide any additional information or support related to living off campus including lease review, understanding tenant rights and filing grievances. This is currently an unmet need at UBC that has been identified as high in importance through the student survey.”</p> <p>AMS VP Academic Kiran Mahal, in presenting the Services Review to Council, says housing could be a new AMS service.</p>
September 2013	Council directed the ECSS [old term for Student Services Manager] to conduct feasibility studies for the following potential new off-campus housing support service.
March 2014	<p>AMS SSM Mathew Duguay presented four AMS Housing Service options to council:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Information on website (\$2,000 a year, \$2,179.79 in 2020). 2. More efficient Rentsline (\$2,500 a year, \$2,724.74 in 2020). 3. Limited service, advising help (\$15,000 a year, \$16,348.45 in 2020). 4. Full service, advising, conflict mediation (\$30,000 a year, \$32,696.90 in 2020). <p>It was concluded that this was not feasible for the AMS and that the AMS should instead</p>

	lobby UBC to create and operate a professional service.
September 2014	AMS discontinued its involvement with Rentsline. Rentsline still exists to this day at rentsline.com.
December 2014	A recommendation to create a service informing students about off-campus housing options resulted in conversations which led to a Living Off Campus page on UBC’s Student Housing website. This webpage still exists at vancouver.housing.ubc.ca/other-housing/off-campus-housing .

At present, the AMS does not operate any service geared towards supporting students with housing-related issues. The AMS Service Peer Support operates to support students with a variety of issues but does not have specialized supports for students facing housing-related issues. Additionally, there is a lack of appropriate resources that AMS Peer Support volunteers could direct students to access. This lack of resources for students facing off-campus issues within the AMS is further explored in the Gap Analysis section of this report.

Institutional Context

At UBC, there is no current service operating that focuses on supporting students with off-campus housing-related issues. There are many services and professionals geared towards general student support, such as Enrolment Service Advisors, Residence Life Managers, UBC Counselling, Academic Advising, the Student Housing and Community Services Main Office and more. However, none of these supports have specialized resources for off-campus housing concerns. This lack of resources for students facing off-campus issues within the university is further explored in the Gap Analysis section of this report.

Before 1993, the university operated a housing registry through the UBC Department of Housing and Conferences that was accessible to students. Due to budgetary constraints, the university discontinued their service and looked to the AMS to be the sole operator of a housing registry.

As mentioned in Table 1, the university operates a webpage on UBC’s Student Housing website with off-campus housing information and resources. This webpage provides the following information: basic information on Vancouver’s neighborhoods, things to consider when looking for off-campus housing, rental average costs (from 2017), links to resources for finding housing, what to do after finding a place, information about housing rights, and information about short-term housing. The university additionally has a page on you.ubc.ca titled “Living Off Campus” that has links to the aforementioned Student Housing webpage, the Commuter Student Hostel page, and the UBC Collegia Program page.

2020/2021 AMS Executive Goals

Promises regarding a potential AMS Housing Service were included in both the President’s and the Student Services Manager’s 2020/2021 Executive Goals.

From the President

The AMS President has indicated that the creation of an AMS Housing Service is one of his priorities. In his executive goals, the following information regarding the AMS Housing Service was provided:

Campaign promise:

- *The introduction of a new AMS Service dedicated to housing needs*

Key Performance Indicator:

- *Successful launch of a new AMS Service for housing by the end of the fiscal year*

From the Student Services Manager

The Student Services Manager has indicated that the creation of an AMS Housing Service is one of his priorities. In his executive goals, the following information regarding the AMS Housing Service was provided:

One of the key pillars of the AMS Services is providing Services that are in demand. In the 2013, 2017, and 2020 AMS Services Review, as well as the 2019 Academic Experience Survey, findings highlighted that among students who have or will likely need to seek out off-campus housing options during their time at UBC, the majority identified a lack of support services in this area.

Among the potential components of this Services requested by students (as indicated in the 2019 AES), this Service could provide:

- *A database of rental postings;*
- *Assistance with determining fair rent prices;*
- *Information about tenant rights;*
- *Lease Reviewing Services;*
- *Advertising Sublets to students;*
- *Assistance with finding roommates;*
- *Assistance with landlord disputes;*
- *and others.*

In conjunction with the President and other campus stakeholders, AMS Services will aim to launch a Service by the end of the 2020-21 Academic year.

Key Performance Indicators:

- *Present a report to Council by September 2020 detailing the feasibility of potential aspects of the Service*
- *Soft launch of the Service by end of December 2020*
- *Present a report to Council by April 2021 detailing the results of early interactions through the new Service*

Gap Analysis

This section of the feasibility study takes a look at gaps in services and supports offered by the AMS, the university, and the provincial government.

Within the Society

At present, the AMS does not provide any service that centers on off-campus housing support for students. As discussed above, the AMS previously operated housing-related services geared towards supporting students with matters relating to off-campus housing. The AMS runs Peer Support, a Service aimed at providing support to students for a variety of issues. However, these volunteers are not specially trained, nor have special resources aimed at supporting students facing housing issues. In regard to housing, the AMS has traditionally been focused on advocacy, both to the university and to the government.

Within the University

At present, the university has a myriad of supports for students. As mentioned above, these supports include Enrolment Service Advisors, Residence Life Managers, UBC Counselling, Academic Advising, the Student Housing and Community Services Office, and more. All of these professionals and units provide support for students, but none are specialized for supporting students with off-campus housing needs. The closest support for students facing off-campus housing needs are Residence Life Managers, however, these professionals are centered around on-campus supports only. Students can access these professionals only if they are currently living on campus in Student Housing residences. A student living on campus may access these professionals for support in moving off campus, however, the supports that a Residence Life Manager can provide is limited. Given that a

large number of students may never live on campus and may never have the chance to interact with Residence Life Managers, this level of support is insufficient by nature for the student-wide population.

UBC has housing support programs for Faculty and Staff, but none exist for students. The Student Housing and Community Services Main Office has phone lines that students can call, however, they are all geared towards living on-campus in UBC Student Housing residence.

At the university, there are no dedicated programs or professionals geared towards supporting students in off-campus housing matters.

Outside of UBC

The province of British Columbia operates an excellent organization for housing needs at bchousing.org. This organization operates the following services:

- BC Tenant Handbook (available in English, Chinese, Farsi, Korean, Punjabi, and Tagalog);
- Multiple tenant forms;
- Education rewards program;
- Housing Listings;
- Subsidized housing;
- Indigenous housing providers;
- Housing and programs for low-income individuals or those who need assistance in order to live independently;
- Help for those fleeing violence in B.C.; and
- Many other services.

There is additional helpful information located at: www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy.

While these resources are excellent in their generalizability, there are no clear provincial supports geared towards supporting post-secondary students with housing besides housing bursaries, which are limited in nature. These organizations and websites have information that a student may find helpful but may also find overwhelming without a comprehensive guide to these resources. Additionally, there is a lack of contacts for students to reach out to at these services to ask questions and receive guidance.

Similar Models at Other Student Unions and Institutions

Across Canada and other countries, there exists many different student unions and institutions that have different degrees of supports for students facing off-campus housing issues. In this section, different models are explored to provide context of what types of services exist, and what could be replicated at UBC.

Student Union - Concordia Student Union

The Concordia Student Union (CSU) operates a service called the “CSU Off-Campus Housing & Job Resource Centre,” abbreviated as HOJO. At the CSU, HOJO operates several services:

- Likehome: multilingual website that offers information on housing matters such as local renting information, neighbourhood information, and how to deal with 33 common issues students in housing may face;
- Legal Information: legal information provided to students by the Hojo team;
- Campaigns: campaigns centered around issues students may face in housing such as bed bugs, privacy, refusing rental increases, and more;
- Coordination with Woodnote – a Student-run housing Co-op;
- Workshops; and
- Rental listing.

The HOJO at CSU has its own dedicated office space and a team of seven student employees that run the service. In total, the HOJO served 3908 students in the 2017-2018 academic year.

Student Union – University of Bristol Student Union

The University of Bristol Student Union in the United Kingdom owns a professionally run housing service geared towards supporting off-campus student housing. Their service provides the following:

- Database of rental properties;
- Property viewings;
- 24 hour emergency call out for tenants;
- Student Union-owned property called Launch Pad;
- Full property management (for landlords);
- Rent collection (for landlords);
- Find tenant service (for landlords);
- Property advertising service (for landlords); and
- Tenancy renewals (for landlords).

In 2019, the housing service (called the Bristol SU Lettings) brought in \$331,086.89 CAD in income. The costs for this service in 2019 was \$463,014.02 CAD, a net cost of \$131,927.13 CAD. This cost is similar to that of AMS Safewalk (\$154,673.57).

Bristol SU Lettings was started in 2013 and is run by five professional staff with the following titles:

- Head of Property Services;
- Senior Coordinator;
- Lettings and Estate Agency Manager;
- Negotiator; and
- Administrator.

Institution – Western University

Western University offers professional services for student off-campus housing needs. These services offer the following:

- Rental listings;
- Housing mediation services; and
- Off-campus advisors.

The housing mediation service offers a space for students to seek quick repairs to relationships between landlords and other students with a neutral third party.

Off-Campus Advisors are student staff employees that act like Residence Advisors for off-campus students. Off-campus Advisors are trained to “provide assistance, information and support to students facing issues such as landlord or renting problems, bylaw questions, roommate disagreements and any other issue or concern that may arise when students are living off-campus.” These students are available from 4:30 PM to 12:00 AM on weekdays, and from 8:30 AM to 12:00 AM on weekends.

Consultations

Many different consultations and surveys have been conducted on topics relating to off-campus housing support for students. This section summarizes these data.

Historical Student Consultation Data

The 2020 AMS Nest + Experience Survey explored how the AMS could possibly explore filling a gap in housing supports for off-

campus students. This gap was identified in both AMS Services Review reports in 2013, and 2017. Targeted questions regarding the potential creation of a housing service were gathered as shown in the data analyzed below:

How useful would you personally find a new AMS Service that focused on addressing housing needs at UBC?

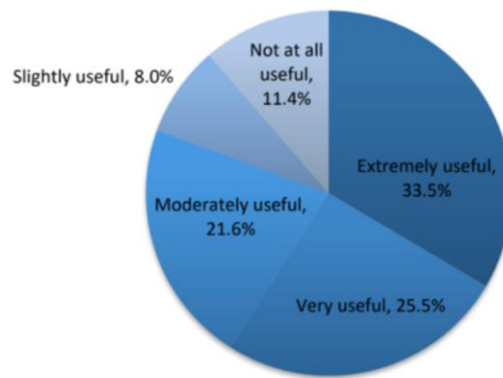


Figure 1. Pie chart from the 2020 AMS Nest + Experience Survey displaying responses to the question “How useful would you personally find a new AMS Service that focused on addressing housing needs at UBC?”

Over 2,066 students surveyed agreed that they would find a Service that focused on addressing housing needs at UBC would be personally useful to them.

Additional data was collected from the 2020 AMS Nest + Experience Survey asking students what aspects of a potential housing service would be most important.

If the AMS were to create a new Service focused on addressing the housing needs of students, please rank the importance of the following features to you

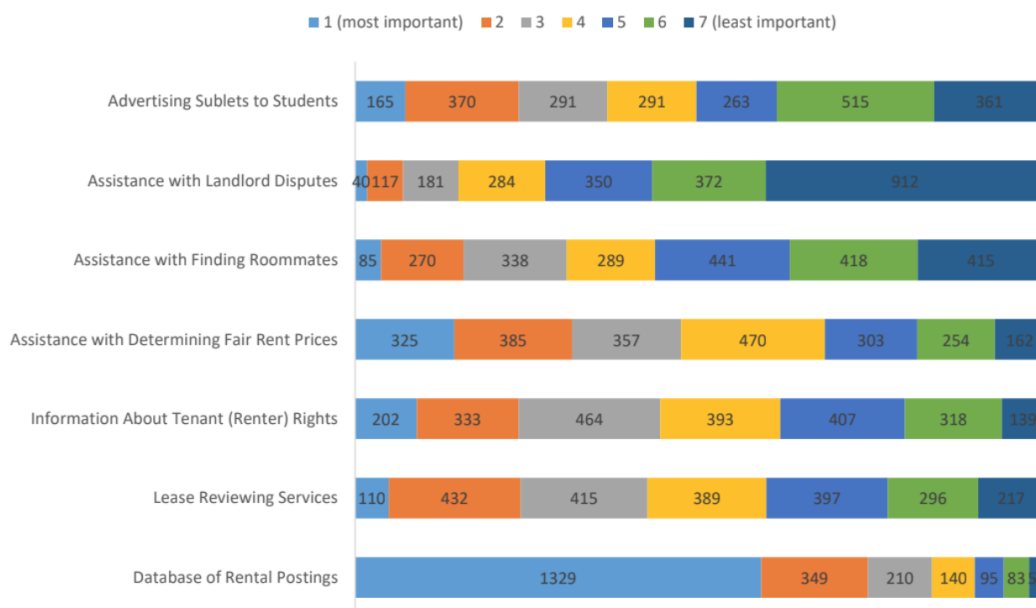


Figure 2. Graph from the 2020 AMS Nest + Experience Survey displaying ranked responses to the question “If the AMS were to create a new Service focused on addressing the housing needs of students, please rank the importance of the following to you.”

The 2013 Services Review report highlighted that among students who have or will likely need to seek out off-campus housing options during their time at UBC, the majority identified a lack of support services in this area offered at UBC. Again in 2017, the review report identified that this continues to be a gap that may find AMS Services an opportunity to take leadership in developing a potentially new Service to fill the need.

The 2019 Academic Experience Survey shows once again, that UBC students are continuing to experience the struggle in finding affordable housing during their time attending UBC. Again, this remains to be consistent with data gathered from the 2018 AES, with just under half again reporting that they are living farther away from the Point Grey campus than they would prefer, identifying the cause to be the high cost of housing. It is clear that the Vancouver housing situation continues to impact UBC students significantly.

Support for students living off-campus is in even greater demand for student now during COVID-19 than ever before. Data collected from the 2020 COVID-19 Survey, ran out of the VP Academic and University Affairs office, indicate that only 8.9% of the 5994 students that responded that they were intending on living in UBC Student Housing for Fall 2020, with the rest living elsewhere off-campus.¹

Student Consultation Done for This Study

For the purposes of this study, additional student consultation was conducted. Five questions were asked of a student pool that the AMS had previously created. In total, 64 responses were recorded.

The five questions asked to the student pool were as follows:

1. What are some struggles that students face regarding housing?
2. If the AMS created a housing service, what are some features you would like to see in it?
3. (a) If you lived on campus in UBC Student Housing and transitioned to off-campus housing, what was that experience like?
(b) Did you feel like you were adequately supported and had the resources to successfully transition off campus?
4. Where are you most likely to go for housing information?
5. Do you have any additional comments?

Notable and informative responses to each question are presented below. Note that this is not a complete record of all responses. If of interest, the complete list of all 64 responses can be provided upon request.

Question 1: What are some struggles that students face regarding housing?

"Finding housing, finding sublets, no affordable housing. As an incoming first year there's not enough knowledge about Vancouver and it's neighbourhoods to know where secure neighbourhoods are and which platforms to use for searching."

"Housing in the Greater Vancouver area is too expensive. Also living with roommates is a pain and it's really hard to find a roommate that has a similar lifestyle to you. Some landlords are also awful and don't take responsibility for replacing broken appliances, things that are wrong with the house, etc."

"When students aren't able to get student housing, it's usually a struggle to find housing off-campus, especially considering the high cost of rent. Rent in Westbrook village or around campus is too much for most students to handle"

¹ Page 22, AMS COVID-19 Survey Report (to be released).

"Credible listings/ knowing if a place to rent is safe and legit. Cost, cost, cost (and hidden fees such as utilities and other bills) International students: difference in currency/getting the right amount of money from parents Roommates Contracts- not flexible enough."

"I think a lot of people struggle with finding affordable housing, especially because it's not easy to work lots and make money while being a full-time student. Also, Vancouver rent is super expensive."

Question 2: If the AMS created a housing service, what are some features you would like to see in it?

"Listings with verified information and set prices, limited access for students to rent."

"Something that helps students find appropriate housing options. A mediator service between students and landlords that helps students find affordable housing options within their budget would be good."

"Maybe a budget tool where students could calculate housing costs for different periods of time. Also, possibly a section where students already in housing give some personal experience regarding where they live and what it's like."

"Easy access to housing questions especially during COVID-19. Since they don't have an office right now, it takes really long for them to reply to emails."

"I would want to see detailed info regarding price, contracts, as well as roommate pairing options."

"Place for students to advertise space to students within the UBC Community Info about neighbourhoods Things to look out for (re: scams?) Where to look for housing."

"Online listing of affordable housing options good for students. Also, a platform that can connect students with potential roommates."

"Peer-counseling, suggestions, knowledge about Vancouver and what prices are worth it and which ones aren't. Do I need renter's insurance? Fire insurance? All that Maybe offering someone to come along to viewings or provide the questions that I should be asking."

"Compiled resources for "what to know and ask when moving off campus."

"Up to date FAQs Customer service representative well trained in topics such as empathy, kindness and understanding."

"Tips and tricks on looking for housing a service where students can sign up to help out-of-town students inspect potential places articles on different aspects of renting apartment and roommate listings."

"Match seniors in the community with students. There was a pilot project in Ontario where single senior citizens were matched with a compatible student. The student benefits from affordable secure housing and the wisdom of age, and the senior benefits by having company, increased income and someone nearby should there be an emergency."

"24-hour support for students. Provide 1 place to access all information and services."

"I'd like to see a lot more support for students living off campus, and detailed information on how to move, with each and every single part of it from how to rent moving services, where to find secondhand furniture and how to set up WIFI."

"Maybe a screened landlord service. Ability to sort by price."

"Financing resources."

"Information for students regarding the things they need to consider for housing."

Question 3a: If you lived on campus in UBC Student Housing and transitioned to off-campus housing, what was that experience like?

"Landlords off campus can lack communication skills, making navigating housing more difficult than on campus."

"It was very stressful. I had an application for UBC Student Housing, but the waitlist was full, and I was not sure if I would be able to find housing in time. In a panic I started looking for off-campus housing and was able to find some less-than-decent housing. I wish UBC had either told me I could not get housing or confirmed that I could. I don't like that everything was indeterminate for so long. It makes it extremely difficult to plan."

"Very stressful, I was 18 and had to face the Vancouver rental market on my own with no references."

"Very difficult, very high rent with places close to UBC and lack of housing supply."

"It was more expensive and more stress."

"It took months of searching to find a place - In the intervening months between moving out of first year residence and finding a place off campus, it was difficult to find a place to store my belonging - Nobody told us about what to expect with the housing market and conditions of housing that targets students."

"It was stressful to look for housing off-campus since a lot of the housing options were very expensive. Additionally, off-campus housing means a lot more of what you have to consider yourself, and often times students aren't prepared for things like internet or bills."

Question 3b: Did you feel like you were adequately supported and had the resources to successfully transition off campus?

Of the 20 students that answered this question, 75% of students reported they were not adequately supported and did not have the resources to successfully transition off campus.

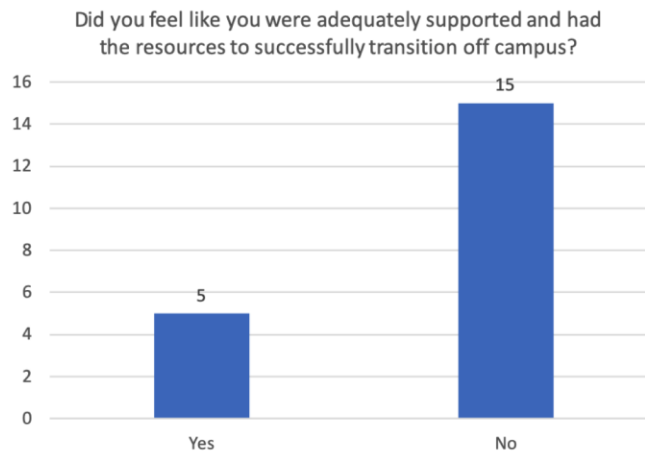


Figure 3. Bar graph with responses to the question "Did you feel like you were adequately supported and had the resources to successfully transition off campus?" asked to a student pool in September 2020 formed by the AMS.

Question 4: Where are you most likely to go for housing information?

"Facebook groups/Online classified listings."

"Peers, sites with postings, reddit or other forums."

"I browse Craigslist, FB marketplace, and a lot of third-party rental sites because those are somewhat more affordable. I have looked at the UBC housing site, but it is so expensive that it's just not a justifiable cost for me."

"Don't know."

"I emailed the university once as an incoming student but didn't get info so I went to Reddit and Facebook and all that."

"My parents."

"BC Housing."

"Not sure."

Question 5: Do you have any additional comments? – Content warning: Suicide

"Housing is stressful af."

"Housing is a huge crisis in BC and UBC does not help whatsoever. ESPECIALLY during COVID-19."

"I am facing homelessness and have attempted suicide because of my inability to afford housing."

The responses from these 64 students clearly indicate the need for some form of action. Many different areas of support that are within the AMS's ability were identified. Some of these were previously on the AMS's radar, while others are new. A list of major areas of support the AMS could provide to students facing housing issues informed by this consultation is provided below:

- AMS Housing database;
- Landlord-tenant mediation support;
- Budget tool;
- Call-in, video call, or email communication option for off-campus housing-related questions;
- General info on website;
- Peer-support for housing needs;
- Compilation of housing resources;
- On-call support for students; and
- Much more.

As indicated from the consultation, there is a special need to support students moving off-campus from on-campus residences at UBC Student Housing after their first year. A potential solution to this problem may involve running special workshops and events targeted to supporting these students. Additionally, many students gave mixed responses to where they went to find housing resources. A large part of the AMS Housing Service should be creating a "hub" on the AMS website (potentially at housing.ams.ubc.ca or ams.housing.ca/housing) where students can go for a "one-stop-shop" for all housing information they could ever need.

As indicated by the responses to question 5, housing support is a huge issue. The AMS is in a position to provide tangible support to students in need. Advocacy efforts by the AMS in the past to improve off-campus support for students have resulted in little-to-no response from the university, thus it is imperative that the AMS take action now.

Description of Service

This section goes into detail regarding the different potential aspects of the AMS Housing Service, as informed by the data presented in previous sections.

Goals

The AMS Housing Service’s overarching goal will be to support students in their off-campus housing needs. Major domains of “off-campus housing needs” include but are not limited to:

- Finding off-campus housing;
- Assistance with landlord negotiations;
- Transitioning from on-campus housing to off-campus housing;
- Roommate and landlord conflict mediation;
- Budgeting assistance;
- Off-campus housing information, including tenant rights, fair housing prices, neighbourhood information, etc.;
- Furniture and appliance rentals; and
- Support for experience of acute homelessness.

When first created, the AMS Housing Service will not have the capacity to address all of these needs at once. Instead, the AMS Housing Service will need to start small and grow into a fully realized service over time.

Scope

The AMS Housing Service, when created, will be accessible by all UBC Vancouver students. Special care will be taken to strive adequately support all student populations, including but not limited to:

- International students;
- Students with disabilities;
- Students with financial limitations; and
- Students with limited knowledge of housing options and processes.

Structure

The AMS Housing Service has the potential to be one of the largest – if not the largest – AMS Student Service. Figure 4 depicts what a fully realized AMS Housing Service could encompass. Descriptions of each aspect of the AMS Housing Service can be found below.

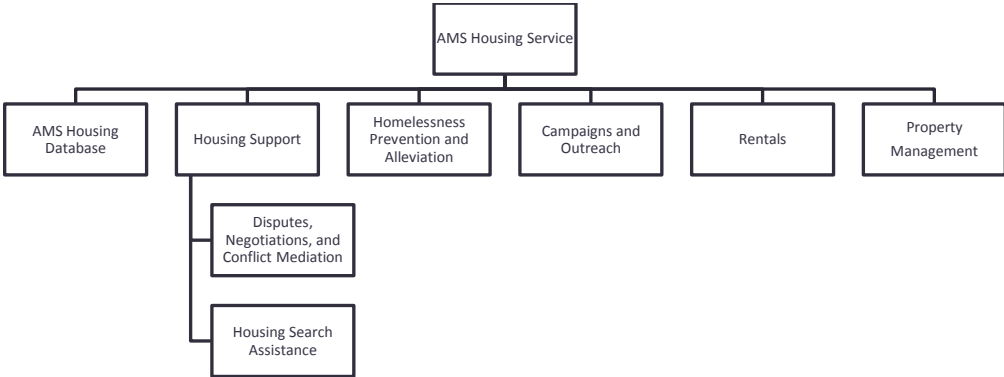


Figure 4. Potential structural organizational chart of a fully realized AMS Housing Service. Note that this feasibility report is only investigating the immediate implementation of the Housing Support and the Campaigns and Outreach aspects.

AMS Housing Database

An AMS Housing Database of rental listings was ranked the most important aspect of a potential AMS Housing Service in the 2020 Nest + Experience Survey. There are three ways the AMS Housing Service could approach a rental listings database.

Option 1: Create and host an AMS Housing Database on an AMS-owned website.

Option 2: Partner with an existing company that focuses on providing rental listings for students.

Option 3: Provide students with resources of existing rental listing databases without creating its own database or partnering with an existing company.

Option 1 would certainly be the most expensive and labor-intensive. This option would require the development of a website or webpage dedicated to hosting rental listings. An Associate Coordinator would most likely need to be hired to manage the database – receiving solicitations from landlords interested in placing listings on the database for a monetizable fee. A plus of this option is the ability to have the database be “in-house” and a potential source of revenue from landlords.

Option 2 would be less expensive than option 1. A potential partner that could be considered is places4students.com. This service has partnered with over 160 schools in North America, including Simon Fraser University and the University of Victoria. Students can access this resource for free if their institution has partnered with them, and all administrative duties are completed by the professional team at places4students.com. The implementation of option 2 would be more negotiation- and discussion-based than option 1 and could potentially be implemented faster.

Option 3 would operate at no major cost and would only require the research and consolidation of resources regarding existing rental listing databases such as Craigslist. This option could be implemented immediately and could consist of a webpage on the AMS website that students can access to learn about existing housing search resources.

Housing Support

As indicated in the Gap Analysis, there exists a lack of support for students with off-campus housing related questions and support. Simply put, students have no one to turn to regarding off-campus matters. The AMS Housing Service has the opportunity to fill this gap by running a housing support program within the service. This service would operate similarly to AMS Peer Support, with student volunteers filling the role of Housing Support Assistants or another similar role. These volunteers would be trained to assist students with the following:

- Housing search assistance;
- Disputes and negotiations with landlords;
- Roommate conflicts; and
- Accompaniment on house/apartment tours.

These volunteers would be the first point of contact for students reaching out for housing support. They would receive training that would enable them to effectively support students that reach out. Skills that these volunteers could be trained in include the following:

- Empathy;
- Peer support;
- Sensitivity training;
- Equity and Inclusion training; and
- Knowledge of housing services.

During COVID-19, the support process could look like the following:

1. A student reaches out for assistance to housing.support@ams.ubc.ca (or something similar) or fills out a survey to schedule a time.
2. The question is answered through email. If the question/issue needs more in-depth support, a phone or video call is scheduled.
3. The volunteer on shift checks an internal schedule and makes calls/video chats to support students.

4. Students fill out a feedback form after the call to capture any suggestions/areas of improvement.

In a normal term, the support process could look like the following:

1. A student reaches out for assistance to housing.support@ams.ubc.ca (or something similar), a survey, **calls in to an AMS phone number dedicated to housing support, or drops into the AMS Housing Service's office.**
2. Depending on the method used, students will be able to receive immediate support or schedule a time that works best for them.
3. Students fill out a feedback form after the call to capture any suggestions/areas of improvement.

This system would work as all volunteers would have the same training and theoretically would all be able to adequately support students. It is important to note that this is a preliminary vision for how this aspect of the AMS Housing Service could operate. In reality, a plan will be created and revised multiple times for this (and other) aspect before launch. Therefore, this process may be subject to heavy revision.

Given the scope of issues dealt with within the Housing Support aspect of the AMS Housing Service, Housing Support could eventually be divided into distinct teams. These teams could be the following:

- The Housing Search Assistance Team (including site-visit accompaniments).
- The Disputes, Negotiations, and Conflict Mediation Team

The soft launch of this aspect of the service would most likely feature just one team, with the Housing Service Coordinator leading the team. However, with further growth, it is possible that each team will be made up of several volunteers led by a Team Lead. Scheduling could be accomplished by volunteer Administration Assistants or by an Associate Coordinator that would oversee the Housing Support aspect of the service.

Homelessness Prevention and Alleviation

This potential aspect of the AMS Housing Service is one that would probably be further developed out in future years. The Homelessness Prevention and Alleviation could work on the following projects when fully developed:

- Research into rates of homeless within the student population at UBC;
- Negotiations with UBC Student Housing to secure emergency housing options for students experiencing acute homelessness or severe financial difficulties;
- Partnerships with organizations around Vancouver centered around homelessness prevention and alleviation; and
- Design this aspect of the service to act as an intake for students to receive immediate support and be a point of contact for students accessing services such as homeless shelters and food banks.

Housing Campaigns and Outreach

A potential aspect of the AMS Housing Service is housing campaigns and outreach. In the past, the AMS has run campaigns geared towards lobbying different levels of UBC administration and government at providing fair housing prices for students. This aspect of the AMS Housing Service would be less centered on lobbying and be more focused on running informative campaigns. For example, at the Concordia Student Union's Off-campus Housing and Job Office (HOJO), campaigns involving posters, social media, and events have been run on topics such as dealing with Bed Bugs, Privacy concerns, and Renter's Rights. The AMS Housing Service could focus on these and similar aspects to promote awareness about topics that students living off-campus may not have. Similar campaigns are run in UBC Student Housing Residence often.

The outreach aspect of the AMS Housing Service could entail workshops run by event volunteers within the AMS Housing Service. Events topics could include:

- Workshop: How to find housing as an international student
- Workshop: How to best use your commute time
- Workshop: What are your rights as a renter?
- Workshop: Moving out of first-year residence
- Workshop: Basic cooking skills

- Social Event: Meet your future roommates!
- Many more.

This aspect of the AMS Housing Service is one that could feasibly be launched by the end of the 2020/2021 academic year. This aspect of the service can also be feasibly run by volunteers.

Property Management

This aspect of the AMS Housing Service is the most ambitious, as it would require a large monetary investment and professional staff support. Continuous planning over many years will be required to start this project. As such, an established AMS Housing Service is necessary before proceeding. This puts the timeline of starting this project at least three years away. However, seen by the success at other student unions that are much smaller than the AMS, this project is feasible. The successful implementation of an AMS Housing Service now would allow the AMS to eventually manage its own property for student use.

Rentals

An additional potential aspect of the AMS Housing Service could be a furniture rental option. As the housing that students stay in is not long term (typically 4-5 years or less), and many students are international and should not need to purchase furniture if they do not want to, the AMS Housing Service could offer rental services. Items that could be rented include:

- Mini fridges;
- Chairs;
- Tables;
- Couches; and
- Bed frames.

This service could operate both by donation and by purchase. Every year, students moving out of first-year residence leave behind fridges and other unwanted/unneeded items. The AMS Housing Service could collect these and rent/resell them. This service would be monetizable, with funds gained going to support other aspects of the service and the AMS as a whole.

Like the property management aspect of the AMS Housing Service, the rentals aspect would need an already established AMS Housing Service in place to be considered. The planning and implementation of a rentals service would probably require professional assistance, and if not, paid student staff at the very least.

Management

The AMS Housing Service has the potential to grow large and encompass many different aspects to best support students facing off-campus housing needs. However, as it does not yet exist, it must grow from a smaller starting point to its full potential gradually. As mentioned below in the high-level timeline, aspects such as property management and rentals are 5-10 years in the future. Given this, the proposed initial management structure focuses on the housing support aspect and the campaigns and outreach aspect of the AMS Housing Service.

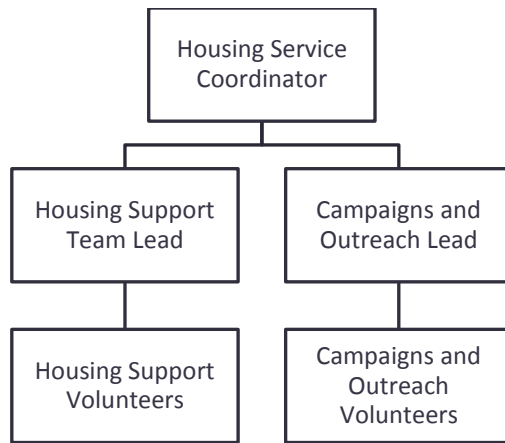


Figure 5. Tentative management chart of the AMS Housing Service by December 2020. The two branches of this potential initial version of the AMS Housing Service are Housing Support and Campaigns and Outreach.

Housing Support Team Lead

The Housing Support Team Lead will lead the Housing Support Team. The Housing Support Team Lead will be responsible for the hiring, scheduling, and management of Housing Support Volunteers in conjunction with the Housing Service Coordinator. The exact role of the Housing Support Team Lead will depend on how the Housing Support aspect of the AMS Housing Service is developed. This position will be a senior volunteer role.

Housing Support Volunteers

Housing Support Volunteers will be the front-line support for students in need of assistance with off-campus housing issues. They will conduct phone calls, video calls, answer emails questions, and eventually conduct in-person support sessions. Housing Support Volunteers will be trained in conflict mediation, inclusivity, off-campus housing search resources, renter’s rights, and other relevant topics as needed.

Campaigns and Outreach Team Lead

The Campaigns Team Lead will lead the Campaigns and Outreach Team. The Campaigns and Outreach Team Lead will be responsible for the hiring, scheduling, and management of Campaigns and Outreach Volunteers in conjunction with the Housing Service Coordinator. The exact role of the Campaigns and Outreach Team Lead will depend on how the Campaigns and Outreach aspect of the AMS Housing Service is developed. This position will be a senior volunteer role.

Campaigns Volunteers

The Campaigns and Outreach Volunteers will be responsible for ideating, creating, and executing campaigns centered on off-campus housing needs. Volunteers will additionally be responsible for ideating, creating, and executing workshops and events. Example workshop and event titles are provided above. As the service develops, key areas and topics that students would benefit from having workshops and events about will be identified and developed.

Longer-term Vision

As the service progresses, more roles and responsibilities of the service will no doubt be added. With this, further management planning will be necessary. At this moment in time, the service will only be able to feasibly support the structure presented above. However, in the future, an established AMS Housing Service will have the capacity to expand and take on more roles and responsibilities.

Partners

Below is a list of potential partners the AMS Housing Service could work with as it develops.

Table 2. Potential partners with which the AMS Housing Service could work.

Aspect of Service	Potential Partners
AMS Database	Places4students UBC/AMS IT
Housing Support	UBC Student Legal Fund Society UBC International Students Advising Tenant Resource and Advisory Centre UBC Student Housing bchousing.org
Homelessness Prevention and Alleviation	UBC Student Housing Vancouver Homelessness Shelters Clothing Providers Vancouver Rent Bank bchousing.org
Campaigns and Outreach	UBC Student Legal Fund Society AMS Office of the Vice President Academic and University Affairs
Rentals	UBC Student Housing External rental companies
Property Management	UTILE Local student-oriented property management companies

Location

During COVID-19, the service will be designed to operate completely online. This will be achieved through video conferencing and email communications.

During normal sessions, the AMS Housing Service would be able to be run out of the Service's wing on the AMS Nest. However, as the service grows, it would benefit from additional dedicated space. The location in the Nest where Merit travel is currently located would be an ideal space for the AMS Housing Service, especially as it develops and grows further in the future. In the future, the AMS Housing Service should strive to offer drop-in services to maximize accessibility for students. A highly visible and central location would help with this.

Budget

The budget proposed below only accounts for the implementation of the housing support aspect and the campaigns and outreach aspects of the AMS Housing Service. In the future, the budget will increase as the service grows to encompass more domains.

Table 3. Tentative initial budget of the AMS Housing Service.

Account Descriptions	Budget	Breakdown
Salary (Coordinator)	\$ 17,810.00	1 Coordinator, \$15.50/week at 20h/week
Telephone/Fax	\$ 507.00	1 line at \$42.25
Office Supplies	\$ 50.00	
Miscellaneous Supplies	\$ 50.00	
Photocopying and Administrative	\$ 50.00	
Advertising and Promotion	\$ 200.00	
Volunteer Training and Appreciation	\$ 750.00	
Total	\$ 19,417.00	

The initial operation of the AMS Housing Service does not have any monetization options. However, in the future, several of the proposed aspects of the service have monetization potential. The AMS Database, the rental aspect, and the property management aspects all could be potential sources of funds to offset the costs of operating the AMS Housing Service.

Timeline

Given the scope of the AMS Housing Service, its timeline spans multiple years. A high-level overview of the previously mentioned aspects is provided below.

High-Level Timeline

Table 4. High-Level Timeline of the AMS Housing Service

Timeframe	Milestone
1 year	First presentation of the AMS Housing Service Feasibility study to AMS Council
	Soft launch of off-campus housing support program
	Soft launch of a housing database or partnership with an external service
	Soft launch of housing rights and campaigns strategy
2 years	Soft launch of homeless prevention and alleviation strategy
5 years	Soft launch of a rental service
10 years	Soft launch of an AMS co-op housing service and/or an AMS-owned professional service

An in-depth timeline for the 2020/2021 year will be developed in the month of October. This timeline will include specific details such as volunteer hiring dates, soft launch goals, training, events, and campaigns.

Timeline for the 2020/2021 Academic Year

An in-depth timeline for the 2020/2021 year will be developed in the month of October. This timeline will include specific details such as volunteer hiring dates, soft launch goals, training, events, and campaigns. A basic timeline for the 2020/2021 Academic Year is provided below. Note: this timeline is subject to change.

Liabilities

Several potential liabilities exist within various aspects of this service. For the purpose of this study, liabilities of aspects of the AMS Housing Service that are 5 or more years down the line are not explored. These aspects include a rental service and a property management service. These liabilities would be better explored with their own standalone reports given their size and scope. This list of liabilities and ways to mitigate risks is certainly not all encompassing. More research is required to identify more liabilities and mitigation strategies once development of individual aspects of the service has commenced.

Table 5. Aspects of the AMS Housing Service and their potential liabilities.

Aspect	Potential Liabilities
Housing Support – Housing Search Assistance	<p>Volunteers will be providing important information that can impact a student’s housing search.</p> <p>Mitigate risk by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thoroughly training volunteers to be knowledgeable. • Ensure volunteers are guiding students to make their own decisions and are not taking an active role in the decision process. • Learning best practices from existing quasi-legal services offered at UBC, such as the Advocacy office and the Law Students’ Legal Advice Program

<p>Housing Support – Negotiations, Disputes, and Conflict Mediation</p>	<p>Conflict mediation is unsuccessful and the situation worsens.</p> <p>Mitigate risk by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequately training volunteers in conflict mediation and provide resources.
<p>Housing Support – Site visit accompaniments</p>	<p>Volunteers will be leaving campus with a student to visit a potential listing.</p> <p>Mitigate risk by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only having volunteers that feel comfortable doing this go. • Assuring volunteers have the right to leave at any point if they are uncomfortable. • Having volunteers go in pairs if necessary.
<p>Campaigns and Outreach</p>	<p>Volunteers will be creating campaigns and materials that will be widely viewed and accessible.</p> <p>Mitigate risk by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with the VP AUA Office to learn best practices. • Gaining approval on campaigns from the Housing Service Coordinator and the Student Services Manager before publication. • Coordinate with the Communications team on design to ensure guidelines and standards are met.
<p>AMS Housing Database</p>	<p>Students will be exposed to ads from external sources.</p> <p>Mitigate risk by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having adequate quality filters to ensure all postings are safe and not scams. • Setting up procedures to verify, to the best of our abilities, legitimacy of listed houses. • Physically visit sites to confirm conditions.

Conclusion

This section provides a summary of all items discussed above and presents a final recommendation based on the research conducted.

Summary

Both the university and the AMS previously operated housing databases and ancillary services aimed at supporting students in their off-campus needs. Over time, these services have become watered down and defunct. At present, no adequate supports exist within the university nor the AMS in supporting students with off-campus housing needs.

Over the past several years, many surveys have been conducted that asked key questions about the state of off-campus supports and experiences of students. The data has shown that students are in favour of creating an AMS-run housing service that supports students with off-campus housing needs.

The AMS is in a position to create an initial volunteer-run service that provides off-campus housing support through housing search assistance using existing service; landlord and roommate disputes, negotiations, and conflict mediation services; and campaign and outreach services.

Final Recommendation

The AMS pursue the creation of a Student Service geared towards off-campus housing support for students.