

# How to Share an MLS

**Oswego County Board of REALTORS®**

**New Haven, New York**

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The Oswego County Board of REALTORS® in upstate New York has a reciprocal MLS agreement with the neighboring Central New York Information Service (1,200 members), which is a wholly owned by the Greater Syracuse Association of REALTORS®. The Oswego County Board and MLS have maintained their identity as a separate entity. The Central New York Information Service (CNYIS) leases its database to the Oswego Board. Listings that are entered in the Oswego system can be accessed through the CNYIS MLS, and vice versa. The Oswego Board maintains its own MLS Committee and it also participates in a joint task force with the CNYIS for the purpose of setting common rules and policies.

Prior to setting up the reciprocal agreement, approximately one-third of the Oswego County Board's member firms also participated in, and paid fees to, CNYIS. In order for listings to appear on both MLSs, firms had to enter the data twice into differing systems. The impetus for the agreement was a feeling among dual paying members, who wanted to eliminate double MLS fees and reduce data entry workloads. The Oswego members wanted to update their MLS system, share listings with and gain access to the other MLS's information, but did not want to give up control of their data or lose their Board's identity.

The time frame from discussion to implementation was about one and one-half years. Some challenges to overcome were a fear of losing control of data and consistency in maintaining the integrity of the database. These challenges were met by setting up the joint task force to agree on standards but still allowing each organization to have their

own MLS rules which incorporate these standards and also allow for enforcement penalties to be set by each MLS.

The benefit for members is lower costs, reduced data entry workload, and wider distribution of listings.

In recent years, the basic concept is still working; however, it has grown. Three more small MLS services have joined with Oswego under the CNYIS umbrella and it is still the same basic concept. Additionally, the database has grown. CNYIS has formed an alliance with the Buffalo and Rochester MLS services. These two are large MLS services. Everyone is using the same database and the same MLS vendor. So now, everyone can see listing data from Syracuse to Buffalo, and this also applies to the four small MLS services under the CNYIS MLS service. There is also an offer of cooperation and compensation between all of these MLS services. A committee exists between the large MLS services that is tasked to standardize the data fields and portions of the MLS rules that are designed to ensure data quality. Other parts of the rules that administer the MLS services and impose penalties are written by each individual MLS service. This organization accommodates Board-owned MLS services and Broker owned MLS services which contract their management to some of the Boards. What makes this work from a technical standpoint is that everyone is using the same MLS vendor.

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