

Regional Early Action Planning Grants of 2019 (REAP) Close Out Report Form



Amador County

Updated January 15, 2025

REAP Close Out Report Form Instructions

This form is for Regional Early Action Planning Grants of 2019 (REAP) grant holders to satisfy the reporting requirements of California Health and Safety Code section 50515.04. The report must be submitted to the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) via email to reap@hcd.ca.gov no later than December 31, 2025.

Additional information about the REAP program is found at the program's webpage at: <https://www.hcd.ca.gov/grants-and-funding/programs-active/regional-early-action-planning-grants-of-2019>

Please proceed to the REAP Close Out Report Form on the next page and complete Parts I–X.

REAP Close Out Report Form

Part I – Summary

Briefly describe the grantee's REAP project(s), including but not limited to the following information:

1. Overview of the project
2. Project start date, duration and completion
3. Project goals and relevance to REAP goals
4. Proposed uses and actions taken in support of proposed uses
5. Actions that had the greatest impact on housing production
6. Overall outcomes including quantified outcomes

Project Overview:

Our project consisted of four separate tasks:

Task 1: Completion of the 6th Cycle Housing Element;

Task 2: Upgrade/overhaul of the County GIS;

Task 3: Updates to the County zoning code/map to increase availability of land for housing; and

Task 4: Participation in the Motherlode ADU Collaborative.

Project start and completion dates:

Task 1 – Began August, 2021; completed January, 2025

Task 2 – Began January, 2022; completed March, 2023

Task 3 – Began July, 2022; completed October, 2024

Task 4 – Began April, 2022; completed October, 2023

Project goals and relevance to REAP goals:

Task 1 - The Joint Housing Element is intended to integrate updated State policies regarding housing production, including accessory dwelling units, increased opportunities for higher densities in residential zones, and the proposition of new or updated programs and methods to meet the requirements of 6th cycle RHNA. The H.E. update incorporates review and analysis of population and employment trends, household characteristics, suitable land inventories, emergency/special housing needs, and government constraints to housing development. Implementation of the 6th Cycle housing elements will increase availability of affordable homes and accelerate housing production.

Task 2 – The purpose a modern GIS is to provide public access to zoning, general plan, and other land use data. Access to land use data was an obstacle to the real estate and development communities in obtaining information on potential development sites for new housing and ADUs. The County's former GIS was using hardware and software from 2008, neither of which were supported by their vendors, and data was last updated in 2011. Using outdated programs complicated the County's efforts to rezone land from a restrictive special use district to a by-right residential district.

Task 3 – The goal of Task 3 was to remove barriers to housing development and increase the amount of land zoned for residential use by rezoning thousands of acres of a restrictive special-use district that was established in the 1960s as a place-holder for future zoning, adopting ADU rules that prevent their use as short-term rentals, reducing the minimum required size of new primary dwellings, and allowing temporary on-site camping during home construction.

Task 4 - The goal of this task was to provide more information and hands-on resources to motivate and encourage homeowners to develop ADUs through the creation of a how-to guidebook, online resources, checklists, and other promotional materials.

Proposed uses and actions taken in support of proposed uses:

Task 1 -

Actions that had the greatest impact in housing production:

Tasks 3 and 4 will have the greatest impacts on housing production because they reduced development constraints and made 444 parcels/18,364 acres available for by-right SFD & ADU residential use.

Overall outcomes including quantified outcomes:

At a minimum, the 444 parcels involved in the rezoning effort have the potential for 888 by-right dwellings (444 primary units + 444 ADUs). At the maximum density allowed by the General Plan, the areas affected by the rezonings have the potential for 1,810 new by-right dwellings.

Launching the MLADU website has resulted in several ADU design/build contractors submitting plans that have been pre-approved for CA building code compliance. This program also helped the County with efforts to comply with AB 1332.

Part II – Lead Agency and Partnerships

List lead agency and partnerships, including names, position titles, organizations, and the roles and responsibilities of each. What did those collaborative relationships and processes look like?

The lead agency for all tasks is Amador County.

Task 1 (H.E.) partners included the cities of Amador City, Lone, Jackson, Plymouth, and Sutter Creek and De Novo Planning Group as the Housing Element consultant. The respective staff participants are Amador City and Lone contract planner Susan Peters; Jackson and Sutter Creek contract planner Erin Ventura; Plymouth contract planner Erica Frasier; and De Novo Planning Group principal planner Beth Thompson.

The consultant's roles and responsibilities were to complete the background data necessary for the Housing Element update, deliver adoption drafts, and prepare responses to HCD comments. The various local government staff were responsible for providing background statistics and permit data, reviewing the drafts, presenting the drafts to their respective planning commissions and governing boards, and submitting the adoption drafts to HCD.

Stakeholder organizations included Habitat for Humanity, Amador-Tuolumne Community Action Agency, Chamber of Commerce, Amador Association of Realtors, Amador Senior Center, Feed Amador, Amador Water Agency, Amador Transit, and Amador Unified School District.

Stakeholder organizations provided valuable feedback during public workshops and following their review of the drafts. Due to multiple staffing changes in the cities, access to necessary background data and or statistical information was slow at times, resulting in drafts for the cities being submitted later than the unincorporated county's draft.

Task 2 (GIS) partners involved the County's planning and information technology staff (Planning Director Chuck Beatty; Planner II Ruslan Bratan; Planner I Claire Girardi; IT Director Jeff White; and Information Systems Analyst Jeff Powrozek) and technology consultant ProWest & Associates (Brian Bjelland, Senior Application Developer; and Jennifer Ward, Project Manager). The legacy GIS for the County was using outdated hardware and software from 2008 that were not maintained by their vendors. The consultants were responsible for setting up the ArcGIS Online accounts, migrating the existing GIS data to the ArcGIS Online platform, and developing a process for integrating the County's property tax database software, Megabyte Systems, with ArcGIS. The County's planning staff updated the zoning data from Task 3, as well as other outdated data layers (parcel boundaries, general plan, supervisorial districts, fire hazard zones, etc.) in the new online platform.

Task 3 (Zoning Code/Map Revisions) was completed in-house by County planning staff. The task was primarily assigned to Planner II Nicole Sheppard, assisted by Planner II Krista Ruesel, with GIS assistance and analysis by Planner II Ruslan Bratan. Staff roles

were to identify parcels with zoning that was inconsistent with their respective General Plan designations and which prevented housing as a by-right use; to identify barriers in the zoning code that created administrative burdens on the housing permitting process and draft corrective code amendments; to identify potential replacement zoning realistic with community development patterns and long-range infrastructure plans; to apply the appropriate CEQA evaluations; and process the rezonings through the statutory notification and public hearing processes with the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

Task 4 (MLADU) partners included staff from four counties (Amador: Planning Director Chuck Beatty, Planner II Krista Ruesel; Mariposa: Senior Planner Ben Goger; Calaveras: Housing Programs Manager Lee Kimball, Planner Jaclyn Taylor; Nevada: Senior Planner Marie Maniscalco) and consultant Baird and Driskell/Community Planning Collaborative. The consultant's role was to prepare the ADU workbooks and website materials for each participating county with local staff review and input.

Part III – Drivers

Answer the following questions:

1. Did any local, state, or federal legislation or mandates drive the project(s)? (SB 35, AB 1397, etc.)
2. Was it a community-driven effort?
3. Were there additional funding opportunities present?

Did any local, state, or federal legislation or mandates drive the project(s)?

The streamlining created by SB35 will allow the development of multifamily housing without the need for additional environmental review or discretionary permits in County zoning districts that . This works in collaboration with the REAP goals of increasing by-right options for housing development, and the goals and policies of the Housing Element update incorporate these concepts.

The recent ADU legislation will make it possible to develop single-family parcels with ADUs included in initial construction or future ADUs. Tasks 1 through 4 of our REAP grant support various aspects of State ADU policy.

Was it a community driven effort?

Task 1 (H.E update) and Task 4 (MLADU) were collaborative projects involving multiple jurisdictions, but they were not driven by a response to local community requests for assistance. While various methods were used to encourage public participation – direct mail notification to affected/adjoining property owners, press releases, 1/8-page newspaper ads, and email notification blasts to interested parties, the public involvement was unfortunately light.

Were there additional funding opportunities present?

Future funding opportunities may include State funding for infrastructure, housing, and ADU construction and CBDG funding for wet utility capacity expansions and line extensions to accommodate development. Future funding for housing construction would support all of the tasks included in our REAP project.

Part IV – Engagement Process

Answer the following questions:

1. Who were your stakeholders?
2. What did the engagement process look like?
3. What role did stakeholders play in the process? (Keep in mind: training, education, council formation, technical assistance, etc.)
4. What were the outcomes of the engagement process?

Who were your stakeholders?

Tasks 1 and 4 involved affordable housing advocates (Amador-Tuolumne Community Action Agency, Habitat for Humanity, Amador Senior Center, Valley Mountain Regional Center, Mercy Housing), Amador County Board of Realtors, Amador County Water Agency and the cities of Amador City, Ione, Jackson, Plymouth, and Sutter Creek as participants in the development of the Housing Element update and the Mother Lode ADU Collaborative's process.

What did the engagement process look like?

The majority of engagement took place with the Amador Water Agency concerning the accuracy of water and sewer service for available housing sites. Other affordable housing stakeholders offered comments on the draft Housing Element; less commentary was received on drafts of the MLADU guidebooks.

What were the outcomes of the engagement process?

Significant information was contributed by the Amador-Tuolumne Community Action Agency, the Amador Senior Center, and the Amador Water Agency during preparation of the Housing Element's public and adoption drafts.

Task 3 required 16 public hearings, eight each with the County Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors, which resulted in significant public engagement with property owners affected by zoning district changes. Most of the public concern was alleviated by staff explaining that the zone changes increased the permissible, by-right land uses. Hearings to consider code text amendments had comparatively lighter attendance.

Part V – Challenges

Answer the following questions:

1. What challenges were encountered?
2. What solutions were encountered or created?
3. Are there areas for improvement of policy alignment at the state or federal level to help achieve this project more easily?

Task 1 - Preparation of a joint housing element with seven local governments was a daunting task for the consultant and County staff responsible for grant administration. While the 5th Cycle joint housing element was comparatively easy, there were numerous turn overs in planning and management staff that resulted in delays in the collection of information needed for preparation of the public and adoption drafts for the municipalities. The numerous changes in State housing policy in recent years also made the 6th Cycle housing elements more detailed and involved than prior cycles.

A decision was made by the lead agency to proceed with completion, adoption, and submittal of the unincorporated area's portion of the joint housing element since the unincorporated area represents 98 percent of the land area and 64 percent of the population of the county as a whole.

Task 2 – There was considerable concern that the overhaul of the County's antiquated GIS system would result in data loss from a hardware crash during migration of layer to the ArcGIS Online platform.

A decision was made to migrate data in order of importance/significance to the County. Of the 100 data layers available, 66 layers were selected for migration. Ultimately, all 66 layers were transferred to the AGO platform without incident.

Another challenge involved the fact that GIS had previously been a division of the IT department, and all GIS administration and database updating was performed by IT staff. As growing internal demand for up to date GIS data and platforms increased, a decision was made to have the IT department maintain the necessary hardware for GIS, and the planning department would assume responsibility for overall administration and database updates.

Task 3 – Code text amendments and zone changes are always subject to criticism due to general resistance to land use policy changes, particularly when initiated internally rather than by application for entitlements from private parties. This task was no exception, given County-wide code changes and the rezoning of over 18,000 acres. The challenge to staff was to present the changes in a manner that focused on the increased flexibility of land use for housing, temporary housing, and emergency/disaster housing. While not everyone affected was convinced that the amendments were beneficial to the County, the well-attended rezoning hearings produced valuable dialog between staff, citizens, the Planning Commission, and the Board of Supervisors resulting in minimal opposition.

Task 4 – The following is an excerpt from Mariposa County’s close out report for the MLADU project. We concur with their assessments.

1. Regional projects prove to be more challenging inherently, but the internal County administrative team did well through patients, understanding and good communication.
2. The team at CPC lent their experience working on multi-jurisdictional projects which was much appreciated. The CPC organization structure focused on the core project management team of CPC and Mariposa and Nevada County staff then expanded to wider circles with the project managers from all four Counties. The scope was expanded early on to include a website which offered a centralized repository for project materials. This website is scalable to include other jurisdictions if they wish to participate, which was a positive un-indented outcome.
3. This project relates to many different codes, specifically, local planning context, California building code and Department of Forestry regulations. Aligning those codes and code cycles is challenging and will lead to future alignment issues as many of those codes are updated on different annual cycles.

Part VI – Outcomes

Answer the following questions:

1. What are the current or projected outcomes? What are the benefits?
2. Did actual outcomes meet expectations?
3. Have new opportunities arisen as a result of this project?
4. What are the next steps?

Task 1 (Housing Element) – The unincorporated County’s final draft was certified as compliant by HCD on September 27, 2024, and all five partner cities have adopted their housing elements. The benefits of the joint project allowed each of the participants to enjoy a cost savings in the preparation of their Housing Element. Other than the timelines for completion taking longer than anticipated, the outcomes exceeded our expectations. New opportunities in the form of a Countywide Working Group for housing issues will help with overall implementation of each jurisdiction’s goals and policies. The next step is for the Countywide Working Group to prioritize housing element tasks that can benefit from this cooperative approach.

Task 2 (GIS) – The upgraded GIS online and fully functional on August 6, 2024. The benefits include a modern, robust system that uses industry standard software and public interfaces that are familiar to users, and the ability to update data without fear of crashing the system. The outcomes are overwhelming exceeding expectations when paired with staff that are well-versed in GIS application and administration. This is evident in the updated zoning layer that incorporated changes from 2011 to the present, making this information available to the public and prospective home builders. New opportunities for County departments that used GIS in the past include the Sheriff’s Office of Emergency Services employing ArcGIS Online for incident command mapping and evacuation notification. The next steps are to update data layers that have been dormant since 2011, including street centerlines, addressing, and utility locations.

Task 3 (Zoning Code/Map Amendments) – The current outcome of Task 3 includes the adoption of code amendments that 1) allow temporary housing/camping during the construction of dwelling; 2) increase the term for temporary emergency/disaster housing from 2 to 3 years without a discretionary permit; 3) reduce the minimum size of single family dwellings from 800 to 360 square feet and eliminated minimum dimensional requirements; and 4) require rental terms for ADUs to be a minimum of 30 days. The outcome of the zoning map amendments eliminated a discretionary permit requirement for primary and accessory dwellings on 18,364 acres. The affected areas now allow SFD/ADU construction as a by-right use. Stiff opposition was expected simply due to the nature of zoning changes; however, the text and map amendments were unanimously approved with minimal resistance due to staff’s efforts to present the advantages of the project.

Task 4 (MLADU) - The Mother Lode ADU guidebook and web resource for Amador County were published September and October, 2023, respectively. The benefits are having a wealth of ADU regulations and construction guides available in one central location, along with access to pre-approved ADU plans. The professional production of these resources exceeded expectations, and the guidebooks are frequently reviewed in the Community Development Agency's various department counters. The project earned a Small Town and Rural Planning Division honor award from the American Planning Association in 2024 <https://www.planning.org/divisions/smalltown/awards/>.

New opportunities include the potential to replicate the project at other regional scales, or locally by individual communities. The next steps are to gather and publish pre-approved plans for ADUs and continue to update the resources based on changes in State housing policy.

Part VII – Replicability

Answer the following questions:

1. What aspects of the project could be replicated in other communities?
2. What useful resources and tools were implemented? Were there specific tools used for specific regions or sectors?

Task 1 – A joint housing element is likely only possible where multiple jurisdictions share many similar traits in housing needs, geography, constraints, and political will. Even with those commonalities in our project, it was a difficult task when there were six communities involved, each with its own project manager. If this project is repeated in the next cycle, it needs to have a single project manager.

Task 2 – Upgrading antiquated geographic information systems can easily be replicated in any community. The necessary software, licenses, and data migration was significantly less expensive (50%) than originally anticipated. Resourceful tools included ESRI's ArcGIS Online platform and the ArcPro software suite.

Task 3 – Zoning code and map amendments should be relatively commonplace activities for local governments. Those with ordinances and practices that are out of sync with State housing policy will be able to identify those items in their housing elements and will have to bring them up to date.

Task 4 – It is expected that more communities will work together to share resources to replicate efforts like the Mother Lode ADU Collaborative. It was especially helpful to have a consultant involved that had prior experience creating ADU guides, website, and other resources. This project benefitted from having an experienced consultant and primary project manager that could make assignments to the participating communities.

Part VIII – Project Highlights, Best Practices and Anticipated Achievements

Answer the following questions:

1. What are the most prominent project highlights and why?
2. What are some of the best practices that could be used by other agencies at a local, regional, state or federal level?
3. What are some long-term achievements that could result from the overall project?

Task 1 – The most prominent project highlight is a certified compliant housing element. This makes the participating jurisdictions eligible for future grant opportunities aimed at increasing housing production, improving infrastructure, and pooling funds such as the Permanent Local Housing Allocations. It also provides a to-do list of goals for improving access to affordable housing that can be shared and implemented by a Countywide group.

Task 2 – Having up to date land use information available to the public minimizes the number of direct inquiries to staff – phone, email, and in person. Having it accessible to internal staff improves response time to inquiries, and streamlines the preparation of entitlement applications, staff reports, and required CEQA documentation. It also improves public safety by allowing emergency response staff to include GIS in their incident command activities and evacuation notices.

Task 3 – The text and map amendments bring the County's land use codes in line with State housing policy, and relieves property owners of the cost and administrative burden of seeking discretionary permits for SFD/ADU construction, and eliminates the non-conforming use status of many existing dwellings in the affected areas. The long-term effect should be housing and ADU growth in areas of the County which had antiquated zoning which had been in place for 50 years prior to the updates.

Tasks 4 – The ADU guidebooks and web resources have been well-received by property owners and the construction community. In a County with a slow growth rate, it will take a few years to see the results of streamlined review and permitting. These resources can be easily replicated regionally or locally as needed and the American Planning Association's recognition should help the concepts spread on a national scale.

Part IX – Additional Resources

Provide web links to:

1. the project itself, and
2. resources used throughout the project, and any other relevant resources.

Task 1: The adopted, certified compliant Housing Element Update for the unincorporated area is here:

<https://www.amadorgov.org/departments/planning/2022-housing-element>

Links to the cities involved in the joint project are below.

Amador City: <https://amador-city.com/government-overview/>

Ione: <https://www.ione-ca.com/planning>

Jackson:

<https://cms8.revize.com/revize/jacksonca/Housing%20Element%206th%20Cycle%20FINAL.pdf>

Plymouth: <https://cityofplymouth.org/6th-cycle-housing-element/>

Sutter Creek: <https://www.cityofsuttercreek.org/planning-building/page/public-review-draft-housing-element>

Task 2, ArcGIS Online public viewer is available here:

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/aa71b74eb34347d9b54a60dcb568f2ba/>

Task 3: The land use layers of the new ArcGIS Online include both current (10-31-2024) and “pre-REAP” zoning (07-03-2024)

<https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/aa71b74eb34347d9b54a60dcb568f2ba/>

Text amendments can be found here:

<https://www.codepublishing.com/CA/AmadorCounty/#!/AmadorCounty19/AmadorCounty19.html>

Specific text amendment ordinances with code section numbers were included in the final request for funds.

Task 4: The Mother Lode Accessory Dwelling Unit Collaborative website for Amador County is here:

<https://motherlodeadu.org/>

Part X – Further Information

Provide information on who can be reached for HCD to obtain more information about the project. Include names, phone numbers, and email addresses for one or more individuals.

Chuck Beatty, Planning/Community Development Director, 209-223-6380,
cbeatty@amadorgov.org