

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



County of Del Norte

August 22, 2024

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

1. Overview of the project

With respect to the REAP funds, the County received funding for the following items:

- a) purchase of a building permit tracking program;
- b) scanning of building and planning permit records for integration into the permit tracking program;
- c) acquisition of software to add electronic plan check capabilities;
- d) acquisition of tablets for the Building Inspection Division to document inspections electronically in the field; and
- e) engagement with the City regarding regional housing needs.

The City of Crescent City received funding for the following items:

- a) efforts to increase zone capacity and related environmental review;
- b) efforts to prioritize infill development;
- c) public engagement;
- d) providing assistance to the public seeking building and planning entitlements;
- e) development of templates and checklists; and
- f) scanning of planning files.

2. Project start date, duration, and completion.

The County commenced the project on September 20, 2022, following the signing of the agreement with HCD. The County completed the project on June 30, 2024. The City of Crescent City commenced the project on November 10, 2022, following the signing of the subaward agreement with the County and completed the project on June 30, 2024.

3. Project goals and relevance to REAP goals.

County of Del Norte

The goal of the project is to accelerate housing production which is a primary goal REAP. The lack of permitting software and hardcopy permits located offsite limited rapid and efficient housing production (permit issuance) due to delays associated with establishing a record of building and planning entitlements and locating hard pertinent files. The new software along with the scanning of all building permit files (1960 to present) has removed this barrier allowing staff to facilitate information sharing with the public more efficiently resulting in less time from the first inquiry about a project to the issuance of an entitlement. Furthermore, the addition of electronic plan review software allows a faster alternative to the traditional plan review process and the addition of the tablets allows for real-time and accurate reporting of inspections giving contractors the tools they need to complete their work. The technological improvements provided by the permit software project also support REAPs goal of enhancing data and analytic capabilities by meeting the objective of improving the County's ability to collect, analyze, and use data to inform housing planning and decision-making.

City of Crescent City

The project was intended to carry out implementation measures adopted as part of the City's Fifth and Sixth Cycle Housing Element. The overall goal of the REAP grant-funded activities was to increase housing opportunities, feasibility of development, and approval certainty while reducing development processing time by

1) Increasing Zoning Capacity; 2) Promoting Infill Development; 3) Developing Housing checklists/templates; 4) Engaging the Public; 5) Digitization of Planning Files; 6) Assisting in Housing Entitlements including the CEQA process.⁴

REAP provided one-time grant funding to cities and counties to update their planning documents and implement process improvements that will help local governments prepare for the acceleration of housing production.

4. Proposed uses and actions taken in support of proposed uses.

Del Norte County

The proposed uses included having permit history available without having to go offsite to locate documents, versatile permitting options by adding an online option, modern plan review capabilities by adding an electronic plan review software, and expedited reporting of inspection activities through the use of tablets and connectivity to online permitting program. To realize these actions the County worked with the Information Technology Department staff. The greatest use was the permitting software which was acquired following an RFQ/solicitation and review by a qualified review team. The Information Technology Department also hired part-time temporary staff or extra help to scan all building permit files including large-scale plans. Lastly, the Information Technology Department assisted with the purchase of the tablets and the electronic plan review software. The cost of the latter item was paid for by the Information Technology Department. Also, the scanners used to scan the files were paid for by the

Information Technology Department and retained for ongoing permit scanning for the Community Development and document management for other County Departments.

City of Crescent City

Following is the response received from the City:

The primary outcome was that the State provided some funding that allowed rural communities an opportunity to update their planning processes to encourage housing, an opportunity that has been lacking in the past. Crescent City can only achieve State housing goals and become compliant with State housing laws with continued assistance from the State. REAP provided a good start.

5. Actions that had the greatest impact on housing production.

Del Norte County

As of the writing of this report, the rapid availability of scanned permits has been the greatest assistance in helping with housing production, especially in the way of Accessory Dwelling Units. The information contained within the permits is useful in identifying the locations of utilities such as sewer laterals, septic tanks, leach lines, and designated reserve areas for onsite wastewater treatments. While this may seem small, it can quickly identify suitable locations for ADUs and identify without having to hire outside consultants or contractors. In the long run, the online permitting program will likely have the greatest impact as it expands allowing for the quick submission of applications from anywhere.

City of Crescent City

Throughout the grant period, the City considered strategies to develop streamlined permitting procedures and support funding requests for multi-family projects. While not completed, the City reviewed opportunities for adopting objective design standards. The City streamlined the approval process for five housing projects resulting in over 263 low to moderate housing units, thereby meeting 103% of the City's 6th Cycle RHNA numbers.

6. Overall outcomes including quantified outcomes.

County of Del Norte

Outcomes for the County included the implementation of an online permitting program that aids in the tracking of permits and processing of new applications electronically. The County also added the capability to electronically review construction drawings and added tablets to everyday use to expedite the receipt of inspection results. Quantified outcomes included the scanning of 36,058 building permit files dating from 1960 to the present. Having scanned copies of building permits eliminates the need to go to an offsite location and allows greater searching capabilities to locate permits.

City of Crescent City

City staff and the Planning Commission began revising the City's subjective design review criteria with the goal of making them objective. However, it became apparent that more effort and time were needed, and this task would become simplified as other rural jurisdictions adopted theirs. Instead, City staff focused on streamlining permitting procedures, resulting in several large affordable housing projects moving forward. These approvals included the application of State Housing Accountability Law, State Density Bonus procedures, and reduction or waiver of parking requirements, all approved on an accelerated process time. As noted above, The City streamlined the approval process for five housing projects resulting in over 263 low to moderate housing units, thereby meeting 103% of the City's 6th Cycle RHNA numbers.

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?

County of Del Norte

- 1) Heidi Kunstal, Director of Community Development, Community Development Department, Del Norte County, administrator of the grant on behalf of the County.
- 2) Dan McCorkle, Director of Information Technology, Information Technology Department, Del Norte County, coordinated RFP process for software acquisition, coordinated the scanning of permit files, and assisted with the purchases of tablets.
- 3) Rachel Sarina, Systems Support Specialist III, Information Technology Department, Del Norte County, acted as a liaison with the Community Development Department and the selected software vendor.
- 4) Jon Olson, County Engineer, Community Development Department, Del Norte County, the lead staff for the Community Development Department for the conversion to the new permit tracking software.
- 5) Makenzy Cervantez, Systems Support Specialist, Information Technology, Del Norte County, supervised part-time staff hired to scan permits and provided quality control over final products.
- 6) Bridget Lacey, Grants and Economic Development Coordinator, City of Crescent City, liaison between the County and the City for grant administration.

City of Crescent City

Lead agency: The City of Crescent City was the lead agency. The Consulting City Planners, Bob Brown, Ethan Lawton, and Sophia Ross, from SHN had the lead role in completing grant tasks. The City's Grant Manager, Bridget Lacey had the primary responsibility for managing and administering the grant. The Planning Commission, along with the public, had the lead role in engaging the public and directing the outcome of the various grant tasks with approval by the City Council. And the City Manager, Eric Wier, had general oversight authority.

Primary partner: The City coordinated with Del Norte County and their consultant at the beginning of the LEAP/SB 2/REAP process. Their adopted Housing Element assisted the City in determining the extent of analysis required by HCD in their preparation of the 6th Cycle Housing Element. Several stakeholders (listed in the Housing Element) were contacted, and comments were incorporated into the policies and action items in the 6th Cycle Housing Element. This public engagement process helped define what were the issues needing to be addressed and focused on the strategies needed to address them.

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?

County of Del Norte

1. No, the elements of the County's project were not driven by any local, state, or federal legislation or mandates.
2. Yes, in that the scope of work was based on community needs to have quicker access to historical planning and building resources as well as the option to obtain permits electronically which was not previously offered. The interest of the community weighed heavily during the development of the project.
3. Yes, the project was supplemented through the County's General Fund for staff costs and the County's Technology Fund which paid for scanners and plan review software.

City of Crescent City

Several state laws and regulations related to housing were the primary driving force behind this project. The update of State housing laws was a driving force behind the actions taken by the City. But then so was the shortage of housing realized by the public, which drove up housing costs in this rural area. The City's own housing element, which had public and community input was another driver. However, the community outreach effort was thwarted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and much of the early outreach was adapted to virtual communication. The City obtained an SB 2 grant and a LEAP grant that also implemented portions of the City's Housing Element, and though the tasks of the three grants complemented one another, they did not directly overlap.

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?

County of Del Norte

1. Two of the activities required engagement outside of County staff. For Activity 2, We had a variety of stakeholders from the community who were consulted in the early stages of the 6th Cycle Housing Element update. Due to the timing of the grant execution, this work was paid for by LEAP grant funds. For Activity 4, which is the subaward component of the grant, we worked with the City of Crescent City staff.
2. The engagement process for activity two was direct interviews with stakeholders representing various interested parties. They included developers, contractors, planning commissioners, staff of organizations that represent the interest of seniors, and the unhoused among others. The engagement with the City of Crescent City was predominantly via email due initially to the pandemic and later for convenience. Two subaward agreements were approved by the City Council and Board of Supervisors at separate public meetings that were publicized according to public meeting requirements.
3. For Activity 2, the input helped identify community issues that were later addressed in the Housing Element Update as well as helped identify gaps that were eventually addressed through the other REAP activities such as facilitating permitting by having an online option and enhanced services to the property owners and developers in the way of access to past permit activity on property. For Activity 4, the stakeholders played lead roles in the administration of the grant relative to the subaward.
4. Overall, the outcomes were positive in that the stakeholders had the ability to provide valuable insight that was used in the development of the implementation programs for the Housing Element update. The information continues to be useful as it shows other ways in which the Department can better itself to help promote housing production. For Activity 4, the outcome was also positive in that the City was very successful in completing its scope of work and the administrative communication between City and County staff was top-notch. City staff was responsive to any questions and sent documents in a timely manner.

City of Crescent City

The stakeholders for this project are the public, residents, and businesses of the City of Crescent City. The City regularly updates its website at least once a month and

provides information about what will be discussed at upcoming meetings. Both Planning Commission and City Council agendas are also posted in public locations and on the City's website along with the meeting packets.

Public and community input was provided at the Planning Commission and City Council meetings. An opportunity for public comment was provided for every agenda item, and comments were also submitted in writing to the City. Although these grant task items did not garner a significant amount of public comment, public input was considered and incorporated into the actions. Comments generally expressed support for the actions that were taken.

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?

County of Del Norte County

1) The primary challenge from the County's perspective was the belatedness in receiving the grant agreement from HCD from the time of the grant award. We received notification of the grant award in August 2021 but we didn't receive the agreement until September 2022. Due to the County's accounting procedures, the agreement had to be in place for funds to be encumbered.

2) We worked closely with City staff on the subaward agreement so that we would be ready to take it to our respective Board/Council once the agreement with HCD was executed. The additional time also gave the Information Technology time to plan for the scanning project which was their first scanning project of this magnitude. They were able to procure a large-scale scanner, and multiple desktop scanners, determine how many part-time temporary or extra help employees were needed, and create the approach to capturing all relevant information.

3) The County's challenge isn't connected to a misalignment in state or federal policies. No area is suggested for improvement from the County's perspective. The delay in the delivery of the agreement was understandable given the difficulties all employers including the County were facing at this time with the COVID-19 pandemic and lack of staffing.

City of Crescent City

The most serious challenge was the delays resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and that neither the LEAP/SB 2 grant nor the 6th Cycle Housing element completion timelines were changed. This then affected the REAP tasks, setting implementation back while the City addressed the other grant tasks. As a result, another challenge was the lack of sufficient staff to accomplish grant tasks. Crescent City is a small rural city with limited staff and resources but generally has the same obligations placed on them by the State as larger communities. Staff was able to work together and share some tasks to keep things moving forward but additional time provided for all the grant programs would have been helpful.

At the beginning of the grant program, HCD reached out, particularly to rural areas, to ask what was needed to assist jurisdictions in updating their housing elements. HCD made a commitment to provide templates and examples appropriate to rural areas to be used during the update process. However, these never materialized during the grant

period. One of the biggest challenges was having to meet State Housing Law that was written by urban legislators, voted in by urban voters, to solve urban problems with urban methods to satisfy the needs in urban jurisdictions.... and then these laws applied Statewide affecting rural communities. No consideration has been given to the rural communities that make up 90% of the State but only 10% of the voters. While the City was busy trying to attract and get much-needed affordable housing, having to complete, for instance, AFFH assessments in the 6th Cycle Housing Element, was meaningless and a distraction. And HCD lacked the staff support they committed to offer to rural communities.

Another issue was that ADU law and other State housing laws changed during the grant period (and are continually proposed for change) during the City's development of ordinances and unforeseen adjustments had to be made throughout the process.

While the above challenges may seem to paint a negative picture of HCD and the process, the City is very appreciative of the REAP funding and assistance it has received from HCD and only provides this information with hopes that considerations for improvements can be made in the future. Rural areas need flexibility in housing laws to be able to accomplish State housing goals, consistent with the opportunities and constraints that exist.

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?

County of Del Norte County

1. As noted earlier in this report, outcomes for the County included the implementation of an online permitting program that aids in the tracking of permits and processing of new applications electronically; scanning of 36,058 building permits which eliminated the need to travel offsite for permit files and created a database to search for permits, and added the ability to electronically plan review construction drawings. The benefits include providing a more flexible option for the public to file a building permit by having the online option, quicker access to historical building permit data which is useful for JADUs, ADUs, and other residential additions, and quicker plan reviews. The latter is not occurring now as there is a learning curve for our inspectors. Acquisition of the software from the Information Technology Department was in the early spring of 2024.
2. Yes, with regard to the scanning of the building permits. The results are immediate and easily accessible to staff who work with the public daily. The implementation of the online building permit program is still in the early stages. We see the outcome of this service increasing as the local contractors become more comfortable with the online option. Likewise, additional training using the plan review software will quicken the time spent in reviewing plans.
3. The success of the scanning project has encouraged other divisions of the Department as well as other County Department's who retain mutually beneficial documents to budget for scanning. For the next fiscal year, the County Board of Supervisors is supporting the funding of scanning to maintain the building permit files and moving on to other Department files.
4. County staff plans to maintain and expand its program to scan permit records that will aid property owners and developers, improve and increase the use of the online building permit program, and devote training time to the electronic plan review software.

City of Crescent City

The City has a HCD certified and City-adopted 6th Cycle Housing Element. The City was also approved by HCD as a 'Pro-Housing Designated City'. City staff focused on streamlining permitting procedures and supported developer funding requests, resulting in several affordable housing projects being approved. The City continues to streamline

the processing of housing permit applications. The City continues to revise its municipal code/zoning ordinance to continue to be compliant with current State housing laws

The City was able to utilize resource constraint/ hazard overlay mapping and incorporate it into the City's GIS system to allow expedited staff analysis in reviewing applications.

The City set up an online planning and building permit application submittal/review/approval using MyGov software

The City updated its application requirement handouts to potential applicants to expedite the processing of applications. The City also incorporated a pre-application review process.

The City reached out to several stakeholders during the REAP/LEAP/SB 2 grant period who shared their experiences and concerns about why developing housing is difficult in Crescent City. Not one mentioned that it was the City's review process or fees, but rather their concerns were more related to the cost of land, cost of materials, lack of workforce, and environmental constraints, which are typical for rural areas.

Implementing the policies and implementation measures in the 6th Cycle Housing Element has allowed a prioritized plan for improving the development of affordable housing. The City has a hope that actively following through will result in an increase in affordable housing options. During this process, the City was able to create a CEQA addendum and process that tiered off of previous CEQA documents that can be utilized for future housing development projects.

The lesson learned is that while the City expended a lot of effort updating its housing element through other funding sources, it had to independently determine what was the strategy that would result in more affordable housing and not rely on State Housing law, including Housing Element requirements, to make it happen. REAP funds were used successfully to accomplish this.

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?

County of Del Norte County

Historically, the allocation of general fund money to anything other than basic services was rare. Enhancements like what was achieved through the REAP grant would likely never be funded otherwise. With respect to the replicability of the County's project, it is likely that most cities and counties in the state already have implemented the items that the County was able to through the use of REAP funds. There is nothing different about what we have done that hasn't been done elsewhere. If anything, through due diligence we were able to replicate paths followed by others through the selection of software and products.

City of Crescent City

As more housing element updates and housing-related ordinances developed in rural areas become available online, they will remain a tool for other rural jurisdictions to utilize. A commitment by the State to serve as a clearinghouse for these would go a long way. Having one or more designated legislators who understand and will speak up for the needs and expectations of housing in rural areas would speak volumes to rural communities and allow some useful approaches and tools to be developed in the future to assist in accomplishing what should be the State's housing goals for rural areas.

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?

County of Del Norte

1. The implementation of the County's first online building permit program is a major highlight. The ability to electronically apply for a permit reduces the significant time that may be spent using the postal mail service when applicants reside outside of the area. It also provides a convenience to anyone who wants to do business with the County outside traditional work hours. What hasn't been mentioned previously is that the Department has also integrated a credit card payment option into the online permitting. We have used it for three months and each month we have seen an increase in usage.
2. The County hasn't identified any unique activity associated with the project that would not already be included in best practices followed by other agencies.
3. In the long term, the shift from paper to electronic record-keeping either in the way of permit tracking and issuance or permit records will be traced to this project. Seeing the benefits sparks interest in identifying other areas where the same actions may be done. Increased housing production attributed to these efforts will be used to encourage investment by our political leaders to continue and expand on the good results.

City of Crescent City

The most prominent project highlights were that during this grant program period, an increased interest in developing affordable housing occurred within the City. This followed a long period of time when few new housing projects were being proposed. The City was prepared to process these applications expeditiously in a community that realized there was a critical need for additional housing. The City believes that the City being proactive at the same time as state and federal housing funding became available led to the response for proposed housing. Four of the five housing projects (228 units) are currently being constructed in the City. As the best practice that could be used by other agencies at a local, regional, state or federal level, the combination of sticks (new housing laws) and carrots (funding for both planning and project development) should be part of any program that is directed to increased housing. A long-term achievement that could result from the overall project is that with the renewed interest in developing housing within the City, others may be enabled to consider doing likewise.

Part IX – Additional Resources

Provide web links to:

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

County of Del Norte County

- 1) Permitting portal: https://www.civicgov4.com/ca_delnorte/portal/index.php
- 2) The scanned permits are not available online but are available upon request. Files may include information that requires redaction or may not be shared due to proprietary reasons (plans and reports stamped by professional engineers and design professionals without authorization).
- 3) Software being used for electronic plan reviews - <https://www.bluebeam.com/>
- 4) Tablets & protective cases purchased for two inspectors --
<https://www.cdwg.com/product/apple-10.9-ipad-wi-fi-cellular-10th-generation-256-gb-silver/7213853?pfm=srh> & <https://www.cdwg.com/product/the-joy-factory-axtion-pro-mp-protective-waterproof-case-for-tablet/7799173?pfm=srh>
- 5) Del Norte County 2022-2030 Housing Element -- <https://housingdelnorte.com/>

City of Crescent City

The Certified 6th Cycle Housing Element is posted on the City's website at <https://www.crescentcity.org/departments/CommunityDevelopment/GeneralPlanDocuments>

Reduced Parking requirements are posted on the City's website at https://library.qcode.us/lib/crescent_city_ca/pub/municipal_code/item/title_17-chapter_17_35

Application submittal link MyGov portal website (link on website) for permits allows housing developers to receive their permit information, ask questions, and view permit step/stage and timelines removing confusion, and inquiry time, and making it easier for developers to move forward with projects expanding housing stock. Accessed on the City's website at https://public.mygov.us/crescent_city_ca

Reduced application fees (4G) and reduced sidewalk construction costs not to exceed 25% of development costs are found on the City's website at https://library.qcode.us/lib/crescent_city_ca/pub/municipal_code/item/title_12-chapter_12_04?view=all

ADU/JADU ordinance allowing more permissive development standards than required by the State is found on the City's website at

https://library.qcode.us/lib/crescent_city_ca/pub/municipal_code/item/title_17-chapter_17_35

The City has adopted an Economic Development Strategic Action Plan (EDSAP) which promotes Housing and Development. Found on the City's website at [https://www.crescentcity.org/media/Community-Development/CrescentCity_EconomicDevelopmentStrategicActionPlan_v29\(Final\)%20\(reduced\).pdf](https://www.crescentcity.org/media/Community-Development/CrescentCity_EconomicDevelopmentStrategicActionPlan_v29(Final)%20(reduced).pdf)

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.

County of Del Norte County

Heidi Kunstal, Director of Community Development, 707-464-7254, hkunstal@co.del-norte.ca.us (Primary oversight for project)

Jonathan Olson, County Engineer, 707-464-7229, jonathan.olson@co.del-norte.ca.us (acted as Department liaison with CivicGov for developing the interfaces and staff training)

Dan McCorkle, Director of the Information Technology Department, 707-464-7207, dmccorkle@co.del-norte.ca.us (Software solicitation, scanning oversight, tablet procurement)

City of Crescent City

- Bob Brown, Community Development Director and the primary contact to ask questions about this project, bbrown@shn-engr.com, 707-441-8855
- Ethan Lawton, City Planner, elawton@shn-engr.com 707-441-8855
- Bridget Lacey, Grant Manager, blacey@crescentcity.org
- Eric Wier, City Manager, ewier@crescentcity.org