

Regional Early Action Planning Grants (REAP)

Annual Report – April 1, 2021

<https://www.hcd.ca.gov/grants-funding/active-funding/reap.shtml>
[March 2021 template]



Instructions

The following form is to be used for satisfying the annual reporting requirements of Health and Safety Code section 50515.04. The annual report utilizing this form must be submitted to HCD by April 1 of the year following receipt of funds and annually thereafter until funds are expended. Applicants must submit the annual report to HCD by email at reap@hcd.ca.gov.

Applicant Name: Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG)

Overall Context:

The REAP project in Humboldt County will supplement the planning resources of all seven local cities and the unincorporated county, which collectively serve a population of 135,500 people over an expanse of 3,500 square miles. The cities are, by and large, in relative proximity to one another, which helps cluster jobs and housing in the “Greater Humboldt Bay Area.” However, most cities are small—the smallest has 324 residents, the largest 26,966; the median city population is 3,373. More than half of the residents live in the unincorporated areas. What this means in practical terms for planning is that, the small cities have little to no resources to dedicate staff to housing, and the large county’s staff are stretched to deal with issues for the most remote residences to the fastest growing areas with community plans that are varied, limited, or non-existent. Most staff wear many hats and must be generalists more often than specialists, and several cities only have contract planning staff.

Humboldt County has not been able to build housing apace with demand and affordability due to: lack of buildable parcels due to geography (e.g. Almquist Priolo Zone), wastewater and stormwater infrastructure constraints, fire protection service limitations, land use designations; insufficient access to funding for pre-development; political and/or public resistance to in-fill development. Some jurisdictions have lagged behind in updating their General Plans or Housing Elements.

One need affecting all jurisdictions is the need for more locations for housing near public transit, and in places where residents and workers would be able to reach at least some, if not most, of their essential destinations by foot or by bike.

The aging housing stock also limits, and eventually decreases, the housing inventory in Humboldt. Housing stock that is not maintained becomes more and more expensive to bring back to suitable shape. If a house is not inhabitable when it turns over, it is not affordable for people who need a house to live in rather than a house for investment. Some downtown commercial buildings that have been vacant for years could be candidates for repurposing into multi-use with housing, but the price tag to rehabilitate them is too high for the owners to afford. So instead the buildings continue to be vacant and continue to decline.

The solutions include improving land use and transportation connections. One opportunity is to significantly augment and expand the public transit services. However, in a county of this size, public transit can only go so far in moving many people—some trip distances are just too far. More lasting solutions can happen within the existing urbanized areas, developing infill housing near the commercial/employment centers, and infilling more commercial/employment opportunities near the residential areas in all the cities, especially the cities that are farthest from the most urbanized areas.

One opportunity is for all the jurisdictions to approach land use and transportation planning at the regional level. They can plan housing cooperatively to maximize jobs-housing balances and minimize escalating household vehicle miles travelled (VMT). Along these lines, the jurisdictions have joined together to develop a regional climate action plan (CAP), which will be a guide for each jurisdiction building out housing in ways that will help meet the State's goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The CAP is well under way. The jurisdictions were all foreseeing significant stalls in adopting the regional CAP due to not having funds for certifying their respective CEQA environmental assessments. Thus, the jurisdictions voted to use REAP funds for CEQA streamlining with a Program EIR that the County of Humboldt will take the lead on, and all cities can tier off of.

The REAP funds also created the timely opportunity to develop the regional CAP environmental document and VMT analysis in tandem, allowing for a more efficient and effective regional approach to VMT analysis and setting a regional baseline. Several cities were uncertain how they were going to be able to, on their own, adequately assess VMT in a timely manner for any upcoming development applications. The regional approach to the CAP/CEQA streamlining/VMT analysis, afforded by the REAP funding, is expected to save all jurisdictions processing time.

The goal is to have 100% of the jurisdictions adopt the Regional Climate Action Plan and VMT analysis, with a certified environmental document pursuant to CEQA.

Humboldt REAP funds will also be used for technical assistance directly to the jurisdictions, through a consultant bench or extra staff time. The region wants to apply the funds equitably among the different sized jurisdictions. Although each of the agencies is short on housing staff, small cities have much fewer staff resources. A portion of the REAP funds are dedicated for providing technical assistance to cities that have less than one full-time equivalent staff member in planning/community development. The goal is to have 100% of these four cities get REAP assistance. In addition to assisting these cities with adopting and certifying the regional

CAP, the REAP project will assist them with Housing Element updates, housing ordinance updates, infrastructure studies, or other planning as requested.

HCAOG received advance funding in the first year. HCAOG submitted a full application in January, which has not yet been approved. The first year's accomplishments included education and outreach to stakeholders, building a collaborative working group with agency planning staff and others; attending city council and special district meetings and giving presentations on the REAP project; researching the status of jurisdictions' General Plan, Housing Elements, and other relevant plans; and creating the program of project tasks and preparing the full application.

Project Highlights, Best Practices and Recent and Anticipated Achievements:

In the first year of the project, HCAOG has worked on setting up its own agency to be able to effectively administer the REAP program. For the entire year HCAOG has participated in the REAP Group facilitated by CALCOG. HCAOG applied for an advance, and with a part of those funds contracted for a classification and compensation study. HCAOG then reclassified the Senior Regional Planner position to include higher duties for housing issues and administering State funding programs. The HCAOG Board approved the reclassification on August, 20, 2020.

In September the Senior Regional Planner provided introductions and invitations for the REAP project to all the cities, county, community service districts, housing authorities, consulting planners (who provide planning services for general plan updates and the like), housing service agencies, and housing and houseless/homeless services and advocacy organizations.

Specifically for the REAP project, a collaborative group has formed to guide and participate in the REAP activities. HCAOG convened this group first in October, 2020, and the group has since met monthly. Those who regularly attend include staff from the County, four cities (including the three largest cities), the housing authorities, and contract planning consultants and housing advocacy organizations. Additionally, staff from Community Service Districts stay informed via the e-list and sometimes attend.

HCAOG has also formed an alliance with the Off-Campus Housing Liaison for Humboldt State University.

Status of Activities:

Note: The activity categories are from the Advance Allocation Request (HCAOG does not have the full application approved yet.)

Activity Category	General Description	Amount Allocated	Amount Expended	Timing	Status	Regional Impact on Housing
(II) Review local housing elements, GP, LCPs	Identify what stage of compliance jurisdictions are in for timely updates, and outdated policies per new housing laws.	12,000	3,772.32	Sept 2020 thru 2021	in progress	n.a.
(III) identify best practices	Review HCD guidelines, toolkits, other case studies; attend housing webinars and workshops. Disseminate to local jurisdictions.	8,000	1,200.00	Sept 2020 thru 2021	in progress	Increase professional knowledge and expertise in AFFH and other pro-housing policies; increase adoption of such policies; increase acceptance/promotion of infill development
(IV) outreach/information to municipalities, housing service providers	Meet with public, private, CBO entities in virtual meetings, phone interviews, and email correspondence (until COVID restrictions are lifted).	22,000	4,062.02	Sept 2020 thru Sept 2023	in progress	increase collaboration on a regional approach to increasing housing and jobs/housing balances
(V) develop scope of work for full project	collaborate with, convene stakeholders to get identify needs, activities, tasks.	18,000	2,907.33	Oct thru Dec.	in progress	increase agency/staff capacity for meeting needs in planning and permitting processes; more streamlined permitting; more pro-housing policies in Housing Elements, zoning, codes
(VI) estimate suballocations; consensus on budget	collaborate with stakeholders to devise budget for full project activities	4,000	648.74	Dec 2020	completed for Jan 30 (2021) deadline; in progress for	n.a.

					April 2021 resubmittal	
(VII) ed. & outreach strategies for 6 th cycle		5,000	0	June 2020 – Sept 2023	not yet started	increase number of jurisdictions trying new land use designations and incentive programs to accelerate housing production
(1a) administration costs	participate in statewide REAP group; prepare advance and full applications	4,100	2,910.99	Jan-Dec 2020	REAP group ongoing; advance application approved; full application in progress	n.a.
(1b) administration costs	conduct comparative compensation study; reclassification	4,900	2,980	June-August, 2020	complete	HCAOG has one staff position with designated duties for regional housing

Summary of Indicators of Housing Production:

HCAOG has not been approved for full funding yet.

HCD post-submission corrections

Housing Production Indicator	Baseline Year 2019	Current Year 2020	Cumulative Change	Notes
Building Permits	346 357	238	- 119	
Certificates of Occupancy	109	155	+ 46	
Completed Entitlements	8	54	+ 46	

Housing development applications received by local governments (proposed units)	539			
Housing units constructed (completed)	94			
Other				

Additional Information: