Technical Assistance for Local Planning

HOUSING

Regional Housing Technical Assistance: Final Program Evaluation Report

Joint Housing Committees

October 9, 2024

Regional Housing Technical Assistance (RHTA)

Established in 2020 with the Regional Early Action Planning Grant of 2019 (REAP 1.0) with ~$24 million.

Created to support the 109 Bay Area jurisdictions in developing their 6th Cycle Housing Elements.

Provides guidance as housing laws evolve and creates a portfolio of technical assistance tools to support jurisdictions through policy implementation.

Received the Award of Excellence from both the Northern California and Statewide chapters of the American Planning Association.

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ASSOCIATION OF BAY AREA GOVERNMENTS
METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Sixth Cycle Housing Element

The 6th Cycle RHNA required more than double the 5th Cycle target numbers.

New housing legislation and requirements (e.g. AFFH) needed to be incorporated.

The consequences on non-compliance were higher and new enforcement means.

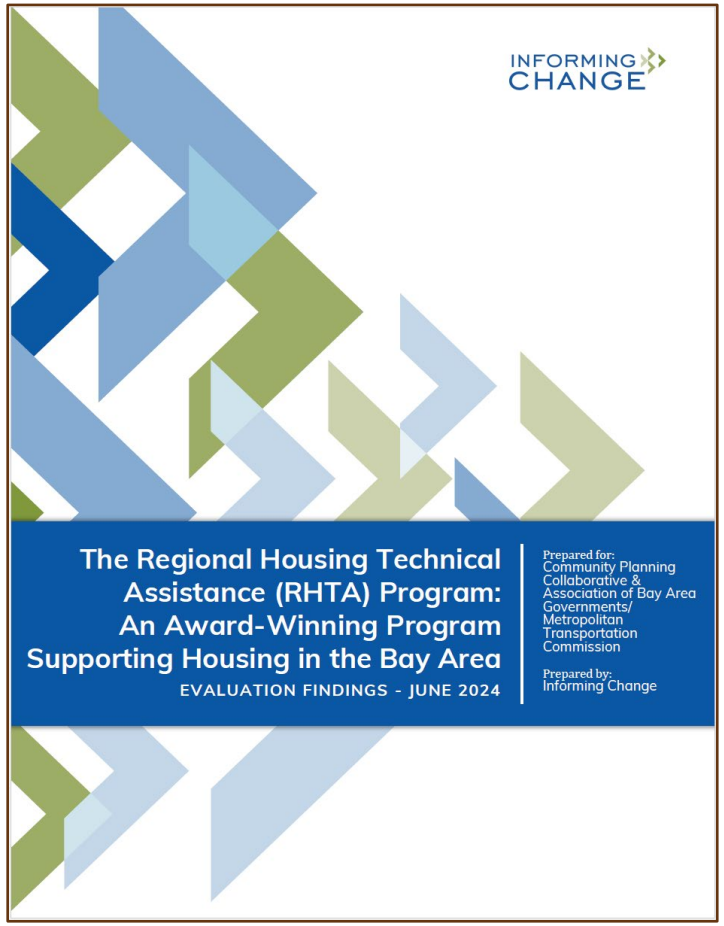
Local planning departments faced staffing and consultant shortages.

RHTA's Six Types of Support

Methods	Examples
Local Grants	• Direct funding for Housing Element-related costs
Data Tools	• Editable housing needs data packets and segregation reports for 109 jurisdictions • Housing Element Site Selection (HESS) Tool
Regional Training & Products	• Customizable staff reports and slide deck templates • Guidance on housing law implementation • Webinars
Work Groups	• Zoning for Affordability; Missing Middle Housing
Cohorts	• Leading with Equity; Big 3 Cities
County Planning Collaboratives	• Part-time consultant support to convene local planning staff

RHTA Program Evaluation

- Evaluation led by Informing Change, a diverse, women-, LGBTQ- and POC-led strategic learning firm based in Oakland.
- Data sources to inform evaluation:
  - RHTA background documents
  - 21 interviews with local planning staff in all nine counties
  - Three focus groups with ABAG/MTC staff
  - Two focus groups with the County Planning Collaborative leaders
  - Survey data from local planning staff representing 72 total responses across 62 jurisdictions
- Received input on survey and interview questions from Evaluation Advisory Group.



Evaluation Focus Areas

Technical Assistance Use and Usefulness

Lessons Learned Administering the RHTA Program

Impact of RHTA Program on Relationships

Technical Assistance Use & Usefulness

- **Data packets** and **County Planning Collaboratives** were ranked as the most useful TA products.
- **Tools and templates that were pre-approved by HCD** were highly appreciated by local planning staff.
- Local staff reported that RHTA tools **helped them complete their work** (87%), **were easy to use** (84%) and helped them **develop their Housing Elements** (79%).
- **Wide-reaching audiences** for technical assistance products throughout the state and country.
- The first 25 webinars had an **average of 123 registrants** per session and **1,700+ views**.
- As of September 1, 2024, **88 jurisdictions in substantial compliance** with state law.

Technical Assistance Challenges

- The **timing of technical assistance tools** could have been improved to benefit local staff timelines.
- RHTA **communication on technical assistance tool availability** could have been clearer to local staff.
- The **Housing Element Site Selection (HESS) tool** was difficult to use.
- The RHTA **website is difficult to navigate**.
- **Grant administration** could be more straightforward for both local and MTC/ABAG staff.

Lessons Learned on Program Administration

The principal consultant model allowed the RHTA program to produce a high volume of technical assistance and work swiftly.

Funding brainstorming meetings, thought partnerships and relationship development was a successful endeavor that strengthened the planning field.

A midstream reassessment and adjustment to grant requirements eased the suballocation process for 109 grants.

Impact on Relationships

Local staff appreciated the opportunity to develop peer-to-peer relationships with staff doing similar work in their counties.

Local staff reported having an improved perception of ABAG after seeing the agencies' willingness to fund technical assistance and meet jurisdictions' needs.

"Knowing that [ABAG/MTC] is the group behind the Collaborative and behind the working group makes me think more positively about [their] assistance to the cities…. The monetary assistance from those grants were really helpful." - Jurisdiction Representative

Planning for REAP 2.0

- Program Recommendations:
  - Produce data tools that **require less input** from local staff.
  - Communicate a **clear delivery schedule** for regional, universal tools.
  - Improve the website interface for **organization and navigation**.
  - Provide training opportunities that **maximize interaction** between planners, when appropriate.
  - **Streamline the contracting process** for grants.
- Program Plans in Progress:
  - Planning Collaboratives to assist with Housing Elements implementation, TOC Policy implementation, and local priorities
  - Regional ADU Working Group
  - New Housing Laws Webinar
  - Principal consultant onboarding