



# ABAG Helps Cities, Counties Meet New State Housing Mandates

After enacting ambitious new laws directing cities and counties to step up housing approvals, the California Legislature and Governor included funding in the FY 2019-20 State Budget to help local governments update their housing policies. Seizing this opportunity, and using a one-time, \$24 million state grant, ABAG in late 2020 launched its new Regional Housing Technical Assistance (RHTA) program. ABAG's program serves as a bridge between state regulators and local governments responsible for land use policies. Available through 2023, the RHTA program already is strengthening relationships between the state, the region and its 109 local jurisdictions, while advancing an integrated, comprehensive approach to solving the Bay Area's critical housing shortage. Highlights follow.

## Regional Planning Bench Streamlines Consultant Assistance

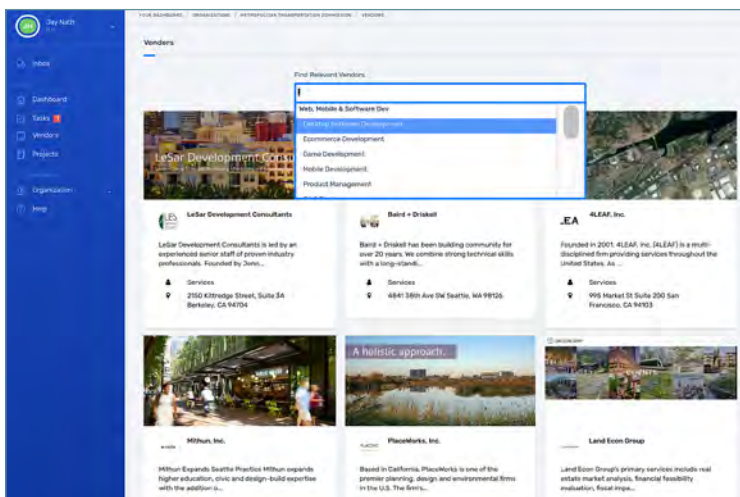
ABAG recently approved an innovative Regional "Consulting Bench" of experts to augment local staff. All Bay Area cities, towns and counties can use the bench to hire consultants directly, or opt to have ABAG administer contracts on their behalf. A labor-saving online tool from City Innovate allows jurisdictions to receive bids, and then easily compare consultants' rates and qualifications. The bench will free local staff time from the tedium of contract administration to prioritize community engagement, policy development and rezoning.



Station Center Apartments, Union City  
 Photo: ©Bruce Damonte, courtesy of Mid-Penninsula Housing

## Housing Equity

ABAG adopted an Equity Platform to guide its work, which will include technical assistance to local governments to meet state and federal requirements to affirmatively further fair housing. RHTA funds are supporting pioneering research between ABAG and a team at UC Merced studying historical land use policies, such as redlining maps and racially restrictive housing covenants that contributed to current patterns of racial segregation. ABAG also aims to leverage Opportunity Maps created by the State Tax Credit Allocation Committee to assess a community's fair housing issues.



RHTA's City Innovate online platform speeds consultant hiring

## ■ Regional Data Tools Save Time and Money

ABAG is providing local governments with access to two online tools estimated to save Bay Area local governments some \$3.3 million and significant staff hours. These tools also ease the administrative burden on the state, as Housing and Community Development (HCD) Department staff have pre-screened the tools, thus streamlining their regulatory compliance reviews.

- **The Housing Element Site Selection “HESS” Tool** identifies potential sites in all Bay Area cities and counties for Housing Element site inventories, and flags those that will likely require rezoning to be used under new state laws. By leveraging a variety of datasets, HESS allows planners to visualize and screen sites based on HCD’s minimum zoning and density requirements, natural hazards, proximity to transit, access to opportunity, and much more. It also automatically populates sections of



ABAG’s HESS tool facilitates housing site selection

HCD’s new reporting form. The tool is being further enhanced this year with data related to promoting fair housing policies.

- **Housing Element Data Packets** – ABAG staff compiled editable data packets for all 109 Bay Area jurisdictions, which contain tables, figures, and accompanying text for over 60 data points that can be placed directly into the Housing Needs section of each jurisdiction’s Housing Element.

## ■ Tailoring Pro-Housing Technical Assistance via County Planning Collaboratives

Recognizing that a top-down approach to the historically local issue of housing will be counter-productive, ABAG has granted nearly \$5 million in RHTA funding to Bay Area counties to support Planning Collaboratives to spark a culture of innovation via peer-to-peer learning, sharing of best practices and lessons learned. Localities in each county can pool resources to hire consultants, share research, and jointly produce templates for staff reports, graphics, and presentations. ABAG also will sponsor Peer Cohorts for jurisdictions sharing similar planning challenges, such as agricultural towns that need to plan for farm labor housing, or areas facing high risk of wildfire or sea-level rise. RHTA also will support regional working groups looking at policies to reduce the amount of driving.

## ■ Regional Support for Civic Engagement

Public participation in housing decisions is key to solving the region’s housing crisis. ABAG has allocated nearly \$2 million in RHTA funds to support local planners and policy makers as they engage their communities around the Housing Element and related implementation.

On-call language translations and communications help will be offered, and ABAG’s website is being updated to include supporting materials, research-based messaging guidance, online platforms, and best practices in engagement outside of traditional public meetings. The site also will include templates for fact sheets, presentations, display boards, etc., creating efficiencies while allowing for tailoring to reflect local issues.

## ■ Online Training

Recognizing that cities and counties face major new challenges in the housing policy arena, ABAG staff is partnering with nonprofits, HCD and other agencies to offer an online training series for local planning and housing staff. Sessions began in February and will continue through August 2021. Training for locally elected officials will be offered in the fall. Topics include everything from Housing Elements 101 and using the site selection tool to best practices for remote public engagement. All sessions are recorded and viewable on ABAG’s website.

## ■ For More Information:

**Email:** [housingta@bayareametro.gov](mailto:housingta@bayareametro.gov)

**Visit:** <http://bit.ly/HousingTA>



# Regional Housing Technical Assistance Program: Links and Contact Information

ABAG has launched the Regional Housing Technical Assistance (RHTA) program to support local jurisdictions in adopting compliant Housing Elements and increasing housing opportunities in their communities. This document provides links and contact information for each of the core program components:

■ **Civic Engagement:** ABAG has allocated nearly \$2 million in REAP funds to support local planners and policy makers as they engage their communities around the Housing Element and related implementation, including on-call translation and communications support, guidance on messaging and engagement, and templates.

**Related Links:**

- "What is a Housing Element?" Briefer Template
- Housing Element Timeline Template

**Webinar Recordings:**

- 4/27 Housing Element Webinar: How to Talk About Housing - Data-Driven Lessons on Housing Communications that Work and Those that Backfire
- 5/25 Housing Element Webinar: Engage How To! Introduction to Remote Meeting Tools

**Contact:**

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 (415) 820-7995

■ **County Planning Collaboratives:**

ABAG has granted nearly \$5 million in REAP funding to Bay Area counties to support Planning Collaboratives, county-based groups of jurisdictions staffed by a paid coordinator to share technical assistance and facilitate learning for Housing Element updates and related topics.

**Related Links:**

- Template Scope of Work for the Planning Collaboratives

**Contact:**

Bobby Lu  
 Associate Planner  
 blu@bayareametro.gov  
 (415) 820 7925

■ **Data Tools:** ABAG has developed data tools designed to assist local planning staff with their Housing Element Updates, including the Housing Element Site Selection (HESS) Tool and Housing Needs Data Packets for each of the 109 Bay Area jurisdictions.

**Relevant Links:**

- Registration Form to gain access to the HESS Tool
- HESS Tool Homepage, where registered users can log in to access their jurisdiction's account and download editable versions of their Housing Needs Data Packets
- Housing Needs Data Packet PDF and Underlying Data Download for all 109 jurisdictions

**Webinar Recordings:**

- 10/29/2020 Planning Innovations Webinar on Regional Data Tools for the Housing Element
- 3/9/2021 Housing Element Webinar on Creating Capacity: Overview of the Sites Inventory
- 3/23 Housing Element Webinar on Using Data Effectively in Housing Element Updates - ABAG's Housing Needs Data Packets and Accessing the US Census

**Contact:**

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■ **Housing Equity:** ABAG will include technical assistance to jurisdictions to meet state and federal requirements to affirmatively further fair housing, including guidance on data, outreach, policies, and programs.

**Related Links:**

■ **Video** introducing research in partnership with UC Merced on segregation and land use policies

**Contact:**

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■ **Local Grants:** Using its Regional Early Action Planning (REAP) funds from the state, ABAG is providing over \$5 million in non-competitive grants and \$1 million in competitive grants to local jurisdictions to support their Housing Element updates and related implementation.

**Related Links:**

■ **REAP Grants**

**Contact:**

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415-778-6752

■ **Online Training Series:** ABAG is offering a training series for local planning and housing staff focused on Housing Element updates, with sessions on the second and fourth Tuesday of each month from 9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.

**Related Links:**

■ **Housing Element Training Series Webpage**

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■ **Peer Cohorts and Topic-Specific**

**Workgroups:** ABAG will fund and staff Peer Cohorts, which are learning communities of similar jurisdictions that meet occasionally to discuss housing topics of shared concern, as well as Topic-specific Workgroups, which are short-term, “deep dive” sessions for jurisdictions working on specific housing issues or adopting similar legislation.

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■ **Regional Planning Consulting Bench:**

To save time and money for local jurisdictions, ABAG has assembled a bench of pre-qualified consultants to provide on-call consulting as needed for a wide range of planning activities.

**Related Links:**

■ **Request for Qualifications** used to seat the Regional Planning Consulting Bench

■ **Frequently Asked Questions** regarding the Regional Planning Consulting Bench

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■ **Resilience:** ABAG has developed products and trainings designed to assist local planning staff with the integration of resilience into their Housing Elements, including drawing connections to the Safety and Environmental Justice (EJ) Elements.

**Related Links:**

■ **Briefer on Integrated Planning – EJ and Safety Element Updates**

■ **Sample Agenda for Integrating Planning**

■ **Safety Element New Requirements**

■ **Status of Resilience and EJ Planning in the Bay Area**

**Webinar Recording**

■ **5/11 Housing Element Webinar: Incorporating Environmental Justice and Safety into your Housing Element**  
(co-hosted by OPR)

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