

# Sustainability Tools for Assessing and Rating (STAR) Communities Report for the Coos Bay Area



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## *Summary:*

- *The Coos Bay Area community needs to have sufficient political, cultural, and financial support in order to make progress on existing and emerging priorities.*
- *Our community may benefit from anticipating new state and federal regulations and responding swiftly, emerging at the forefront to assume a leadership role among rural communities across the state and nation.*
- *Our community should continue to leverage its rural location, but must remain alert to problems that may be masked by the characteristics of the rural landscape.*

## Introduction

This Sustainability Tools for Assessing and Rating (STAR) Communities Report is a socioeconomic assessment of the communities in the Coos Coos Bay area, encompassing a broad range of socioeconomic topics that collectively define sustainability at the community level. This evaluation is integral to the Community section of the Data Source which employs two methods to characterize and assess socioeconomic conditions in the Coos Coos Bay area. The first method uses data from the Census, state and federal agencies, and other readily available and reliable sources to analyze and characterize a standard suite of socioeconomic topics: demographics, communities and neighborhoods, schools and education, jobs, and land use (Chapters 3-6).

The second approach (this report) employs the existing STAR Community Rating System, to evaluate a comprehensive set of indicators that collectively assess community vitality, capacity, and resilience (STAR Communities, 2014). STAR uses data from the Census and agencies as the first method does, but it also includes national and state databases and local as well as informal data sources. The end product is a standardized metric that gauges socioeconomic conditions of the community.

This report has four sections: 1) Evaluation System, which details the process through which the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds (PCW) Committee chose the evaluation system used for the socioeconomic assessment; 2) Methods, which guides the reader through the steps used to gather, analyze,

and evaluate data using the STAR evaluation system; 3) Results, which addresses the overall outcomes of the assessment, as well as each of the seven main socioeconomic topics that are the framework for the STAR evaluation system: Built Environment; Climate and Energy; Economy and Jobs; Education, Arts, and Community; Equity and Empowerment; Health and Safety; and Natural Systems; and 4) Discussion, which addresses caveats to the results, provides factors that appear to contribute to high or low achievement within the evaluation system, and makes suggestions for future steps that the community could take.

These sections are followed by a Reference section- a bibliography of resources used in the writing of this report- and Appendices that include a spreadsheet of the raw assessment data, a list of data sources used in the assessment, and an example of a data collection survey used for some areas of the assessment.

## Evaluation System

### Needs Assessment

The PCW Committee first approached the socioeconomic portion of the project by conducting a needs assessment to identify the scope of socioeconomic attributes, the desired outcomes, and the envisioned uses of the results. Emerging from this assessment was a need for two types of analyses. One type of analysis would use more traditional sociological methods to evaluate key topics in the community with objectivity, but also sensitivity to local knowledge. The second type of analysis would use a standardized and

widely accepted evaluation framework to assess a broader scope of topics, providing a way to objectively compare the Coos estuary communities to other communities in Oregon and nationwide.

Once the vision, goals, and needs for the Community part of the Data Source were identified, the PCW Committee explored different options for a standardized evaluation framework. Two frameworks were identified: the STAR Community Rating System (STAR Communities, 2014) and Community Vitality Indicators (Etuk, 2012), the latter of which is a product of an Oregon State University graduate student thesis based on work for the Ford Institute for Community Building. The merits and drawbacks of each framework were evaluated and presented to the PCW Committee in October 2013. The two systems are based on a similar definition of sustainability or community vitality and their scopes are similarly broad. However, STAR has significantly more breadth, depth, and detail compared to the Community Vitality Indicators. Additionally, the results from the STAR metric scores can be compared to other communities across the United States. Therefore, it was decided that the Data Source should use the STAR Community Rating System for the socioeconomic evaluation.

#### WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?

*“Sustainability” is often characterized as a three--legged stool that depends on positive economic, social, and environmental outcomes. STAR uses this definition as the foundation of its evaluation system, with the recognition that sustainability will differ for every community. This report adopts STAR’s definition of sustainability, but prefers to consider the STAR framework as way to assess the Coos Coos Bay area in terms of locally--driven approaches to responsible development and building community capacity and resilience.*

*These elements can be found in every part of the community, including each of the 7 goal areas of the STAR system, listed in Figure 1.*

### STAR Community Rating System

The STAR Rating System has seven goal areas, listed in Figure 1, which cover a broad range of topics, from health care to workforce development to water quality, that collectively define sustainability at the community level. Each goal area is supported by 5-7 objectives. The achievement of these objectives, and by extension their respective goal areas, is determined by over 500 evaluation measures. STAR uses two types of evaluation measures:

- 1. Community Level Outcomes** indicate a community's progress toward a desired state or condition within the objective, represented as trend lines, targets, or thresholds.
- 2. Local Actions** describe decisions or investments a community makes to move closer to the given outcomes, such as municipal code changes, partnership development, and infrastructure upgrades.

STAR evaluation measures correlate to similar evaluation systems that attempt to assess the health, resilience, or sustainability of communities. For example, many of STAR's evaluation measures align with the metrics used in the Tracking Oregon's Progress (TOP) project:

*"The indicators were selected to reflect state priorities as expressed in the Oregon Benchmarks and the 10- year Plan (Governor Kitzhaber 2013). Additional indicators were added based on their inclusion in the State of Our Health 2013: Key Health Indicators for Oregonians report by Oregon Health & Science University and Portland State University. A*



Figure 1. List of socioeconomic topics, or Goal Areas, that collectively define sustainability at the community level, according to the STAR Rating System.

*small number of additional indicators were selected to reflect trends in social science research and to illuminate issues of disparities and equity." (Weber, Worcel, Etuk, & Adams, 2014).*

The Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Neighborhood Development (LEED ND) rating system, a national system managed by the U.S. Green Building Council, also uses metrics that are found in the STAR system (U.S. Green Building Council, 2013). However, the LEED ND program is on a project-by-project basis, making it unsuitable for ongoing evaluation of the community as a complete system.

The correlation between the STAR rating system and similar efforts in Oregon and the across the country indicates that the PCW

Committee is using a framework that is comparable to what other cities and regions use. There are 70 communities currently participating in the STAR Community Rating System to some degree, as of July 2014. Ten of those participants are counties, and the Coos Bay area is the only regional example that spans city and county jurisdictions. However, ten percent of participating communities have a population of 30,000 or less. These statistics demonstrate that the Coos Bay area will be able to use the results of the STAR assessment to compare its responsible development efforts with other communities across the nation, which is useful both for planning and fundraising efforts. This also indicates that the Coos Bay area is unique in its collaborative and grassroots efforts to advance regional efforts for responsible and resilient development, which holds promise for the long-term viability of the outcomes that are produced.

#### Adapting STAR for the Coos Coos Bay area

The STAR system was designed to be inherently adaptable to the needs and available resources of individual communities. However, applying the rating system to the Data Source project creates a unique case study because (1) the Coos Coos Bay area is currently the only community using the rating system as an organization rather than a local government, and (2) the Coos Coos Bay area is the only example of a watershed-scale assessment rather than a city or county jurisdiction.

*The Coos Coos Bay area community is the only example of a watershed-scale assessment in the STAR Communities system.*

The first circumstance presents an advantage of a more bottom-up community approach, which can be useful in securing broad support from diverse stakeholders and engaging them more fully in the assessment and planning process. A disadvantage of this approach is that the local government has a major role to play in the assessment in terms of providing data and analyses, making them a more natural coordinating body that could potentially conduct the assessment with more ease, assuming they had the resources to do so.

The second circumstance is advantageous because the Coos Bay area is positioned as a leader by taking a regional approach to responsible development and community resilience. Undoubtedly there are many communities across the nation taking a similar approach, but the Coos Bay area is the only one that is doing so through the STAR framework. By conducting a watershed-scale assessment, the Data Source project transcends political boundaries, yet still acknowledges and

respects them, providing a valuable perspective on development and planning for future changes.

In addition to these two circumstances, the rural nature of the community and its limited resources present some challenges to completing the STAR assessment itself, mainly because lack of data prevents certain measures from being evaluated. Nevertheless, the STAR system is extensive enough that a sufficient breadth and depth of data was collected to conduct a thorough evaluation of community conditions.

## Methods

### Strategy Development

Once the STAR system was selected, Data Source project staff completed an initial scan of the STAR system to identify data needs, sources, and create a project timeline. There were three levels of data requirements that corresponded to three phases in the timeline:

1. **Less than 3 months:** Data exists for local area and can be accessed online or through simple request process. Data requires minor to no calculations.

*Example: Housing and transportation costs as a percentage of average household income is an indicator of housing affordability in a community. These costs, as a percentage of the Annual Mean Income for the Coos Coos Bay area community, were found using the Center for Neighborhood Technology's Housing and Transportation Index ([www.htaindex.org](http://www.htaindex.org)),*

*a simple online mapping tool that uses socioeconomic data generated from the Census and other sources with resolution at the Census block level. (See Built Environment-4, Outcome 1).*

2. **3 to 6 months:** Some local data may exist, but may need to be collected from multiple sources, or data may require some degree of analysis or calculation.

*Example: The number of recreational facilities available to residents, in proportion to the population, indicates how conducive the community is to active living. Active recreational facilities, including swimming pools, skate parks, tennis courts, playgrounds and baseball/softball diamonds, were identified through the Coos Bay Master Parks Plan, city and county websites, and Google Earth imagery. Once an inventory of each facility type was complete, ratio of facility to 10,000 people was calculated and evaluated compared to the STAR targets. (See Health and Safety-1, Action 10)*

3. **Greater than 6 months:** Little or no local data exists, or systems may not be in place to collect data easily, or data requires more elaborate calculations or analyses.

*Example: Reducing greenhouse gas emissions is a common strategy to reduce a community's contribution to climate change. There are many steps, big and small, that a community can take to make progress toward this broader goal, including adopting energy efficiency regulations*

*for public buildings. A survey was sent to local government agencies (Coos Bay, North Bend, and Coos County) to determine exactly what the Coos Coos Bay area community was doing (see Appendix C: Sustainability Scan). The survey responses were compiled to determine achievement toward each evaluation measure. (See Climate and Energy-2)*

Data collection and analysis first focused on the “lowest hanging fruit” (less than 3 months) and attended to the more rigorous measures (3 months or longer) later.

#### Data Collection

Some of the STAR evaluation measures have clearly identified data sources, such as a national database accessible online. Others refer to state or local agencies that commonly collect and provide such data. The majority, however, either suggest a local city or county department that may hold the data, or do not refer to any potential source whatsoever. For the latter three instances, potential data sources—organizations or agencies—were identified for each evaluation

measure and information requests were submitted to the most likely individual responsible for the data. These requests were often referred to another staff member or a different organization or agency. In some cases, these requests followed a simple process and produced the precise data required for the given evaluation measure. In other cases, the requests could not be wholly met due to incomplete data, similar but not the exact type

of data, or an entire lack of data on the topic altogether. Such situations were still productive for the evaluation, since they shed light on matters that received less attention from local stakeholders, and/or were matters less pertinent to the circumstances of a rural community—the latter of which was a common theme throughout the STAR Rating System. For certain organizations and agencies from whom a large amount of information was requested, a survey format was used in a “Sustainability Scan” (see Appendix C). The survey was modeled after a similar one used to assess sustainable actions taken by government leaders in Des Moines, Iowa as a part of their regional long-term planning efforts (Sasaki Associates, 2012). Our Sustainability Scan format was used to collect information from city, county, and school district administrators. The survey asked administrators whether their organization or agency was currently taking action, thinking about taking action, or not taking action on the pertinent evaluation measures. There was also a section where the administrator could describe what their actions entailed. For example, we asked school administrators about out-of-school tutoring programs available in their respective schools.

#### Data Analysis

Once collected, the data required various degrees of analysis. The majority involved minor descriptive statistics to determine average trends over a given period of time—usually the past three years. Many also involved geographic analyses to determine access to services, concentrations of popula-

tion subsets and services, and answer other geographic questions. Most of the analyses were completed and documented in the form of spreadsheets, charts, and maps. A few analyses required more time than was able to be allotted or were beyond the ability of staff, and therefore were marked for future analysis when time and/or skill was available.

### Evaluation

Each evaluation measure with completed data analysis was then assessed on whether it met the target identified by STAR. Targets are based on national or widely accepted standards or on local goals and targets. Evaluation measures received two types of scores based on their achievement of targets. The first score is a numerical one derived directly from the point system in the STAR Rating System. The STAR point system is complex and a detailed explanation is beyond the purview of this report. However, it is worth noting that the point values are based on the impact that each evaluation measure has on achieving community sustainability as well as the impact it has on achieving the specified goals. In the STAR Rating System, points for each evaluation measure are used to calculate an overall sustainability score for the community, which determines the community's achievement level.

The STAR numeric score provides a dynamic metric that enables the PCW Committee to compare the Coos Coos Bay area community to others of similar size and/or achievement level across the country. However, the STAR

score does not capture the intermediate progress of many evaluation measures.

Therefore, in addition to the STAR score, Data Source project staff use a categorical scoring system to recognize initial progress toward given goals and thus provide a more nuanced assessment of current conditions. For this categorical score, evaluation measures are given one of five categories:

1. Meeting/exceeding the target: The target(s) was met or exceeded across the community— including all eligible jurisdictions (cities, school districts, etc.).
2. Partially meeting the target: A number of situations could be occurring, including:
  - Only one city meets the target(s);
  - Only one school district meets the target(s);
  - Only one or some of multiple targets in a single evaluation measure are met;
  - Progress has been demonstrated, but the target has not been fully achieved; or
  - Other situations.
3. Not meeting the target: The target(s) was not met and no significant progress has been demonstrated in any of the eligible jurisdictions.
4. Pending: Data collection or analysis has begun but is not yet complete and the evaluation measure cannot be categorized at this time.

5. Unable to Evaluate or N/A: Data was insufficient at time of evaluation, required more extensive analysis, or were inapplicable to the community.

During the course of the evaluation, it became clear that some evaluation measures could not be analyzed due to either lack of data or the need for more extensive analyses with several data elements that would have to be obtained from various agencies and departments. These evaluation measures were marked as requiring assessment at a future time when data is available and completely collected.

## Results

### Overall Achievement

The Coos Coos Bay area community performed moderately in the STAR assessment. The total STAR score was 237 out of 500, and the average categorical score for meeting or partially meeting the target was 48%. The community is excelling in some areas, such as Health and Safety and the Built Environment, while other areas could use considerable improvement, such as Climate and Energy. An analysis of the varied achievement levels can be found in the Discussion section, which is preceded by sections explaining the community's performance in each STAR goal area. Figure 2 shows the STAR Score and categorical score for each goal area.

## DUAL SCORING SYSTEM

### *What is the difference?*

*The STAR Score and Categorical Score differ on their treatment of intermediate progress toward targets.*

*The **STAR Score** rarely offers partial points for intermediate progress, and only for selected evaluation measures.*

*The **Categorical Score** recognizes intermediate progress through a category of "partially meeting the target". Any evaluation measure is eligible for this category for various reasons.*

### *Do the two scores align?*

*Sometimes. The sum of the two categories meeting/exceeding or partially meeting the target is usually greater than the STAR score, but sometimes it is less.*

*The main reason for this is that the STAR score does not address how to assess multiple jurisdictions in a single point system. For example, when only one city is meeting the target, no STAR points were awarded, but the evaluation measure was categorized as partially meeting the target. In this case, the STAR score would be less than the categorical score.*

### *Why should we use both?*

*It is not necessary to use a dual scoring system, but it is certainly helpful. The categorical score, especially when compared to the STAR score, helps explain the community's achievement—it clarifies whether the achievement is supported by efforts spanning the entire community or only a certain portion of it. It helps direct our attention to areas that appear to be successful, but actually could use additional support. Finally, it provides an estimate of the level of achievement the community could reach if it were to shift from only partially meeting targets to fully meeting or even exceeding targets.*

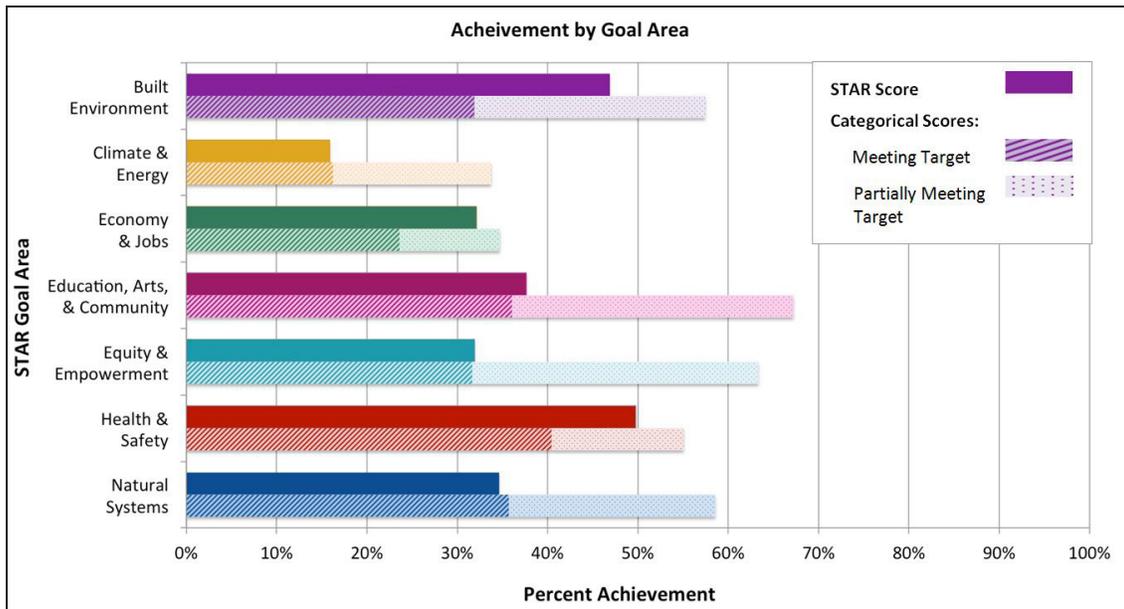


Figure 2. Achievement scores (STAR and categorical) by goal area for the Bay Area community. The top bar (darker solid color) in each goal area is the STAR Score and the lower bar is the Categorical Score, which is separated into the percentage Meeting Target (darker striped color) and Partially Meeting Target (lighter striped color).

### Community Rankings

If the Coos Bay area community were seeking official certification through the STAR Rating System, its overall STAR score of 237 would qualify it as a 3- STAR Community, according to the certification levels (Figure 3). Figure 4 lists the communities nationwide that have received 3-STAR certification. Figure 5 lists the other communities either participating or certified in the STAR Rating System that have a comparable population size to the Coos Bay area.

These tables indicate that if the Coos Bay area community chose to pursue certification, it has the potential to be the community with the smallest population size to achieve 3-STAR certification (although Northhampton, MA has achieved 5-STAR certification), and be

Certification Rating Levels	Point Range
5---STAR Community	600+
4---STAR Community	400---599
3---STAR Community	200---399
Reporting STAR Community	<200

Figure 3. STAR Rating System certification levels. The number of points that a community achieves in the STAR rating system determines its certification or recognition level.

among the only communities of its size range to achieve certification status.

Currently, the Coos Bay area is a participating community, meaning that it is using STAR to assess its current conditions and determine whether pursuing STAR certification is right for the community. If the Coos Bay area chooses to seek certification, it would be considered a reporting community while it

Community	State	Population
Cleveland	Ohio	393,806
Chandler	Arizona	240,622
Albany	New York	97,000
Indianapolis	Indiana	820,445
Fort Collins	Colorado	143,986
Lee County	Florida	348,240
Des Moines	Iowa	200,000

Figure 4. Communities certified as 3--STAR Communities, with population size.

Community	State	Population	Level of Achievement
Bay Area	Oregon	30,000	Participating Community
Northampton	Massachusetts	29,000	5--STAR Community
El Cerrito	California	23,549	Reporting Community
Rosemount	Minnesota	22,000	Reporting Community
Blacksburg	Virginia	42,620	Participating Community
Bonita Springs	Florida	46,000	Participating Community
Hamilton	Ohio	62,000	Participating Community
Flagstaff	Arizona	64,000	Participating Community
Dubuque	Iowa	58,155	Reporting Community
Portland	Maine	65,000	Reporting Community
Park Forest	Illinois	21,975	Reporting Community
Grove City	Ohio	40,000	Participating Community

Figure 5. Communities participating in or certified by STAR Rating System with comparable population size to the Bay Area community.

prepares data, analyses, and documents to submit to STAR and waits for STAR verification team to review its evaluation and issue an official Community Rating based on the points achieved.

#### Goal Area Outcomes

The following sections detail the community's achievement for each goal area, summarized in Figure 2 above. Each section lists the STAR goal, a description of the community's overall performance, and the overall achievement in both STAR and categorical scores. Following this "snapshot" is a chart that shows the STAR and categorical scores for the 5-7 objectives in each goal area. Like the chart in Figure 2,

the top bar (darker solid color) is the STAR score for that objective, and the lower bar is the categorical score, which is divided into the percentage Meeting Target (darker striped color) and Partially Meeting Target (lighter striped color). Following the charts are descriptions of objectives that are notable achievements, areas for improvement, or examples of successful or positive activity in the community.

## Built Environment

### GOAL:

Achieve livability, choice, and access for all where people live, work, and play

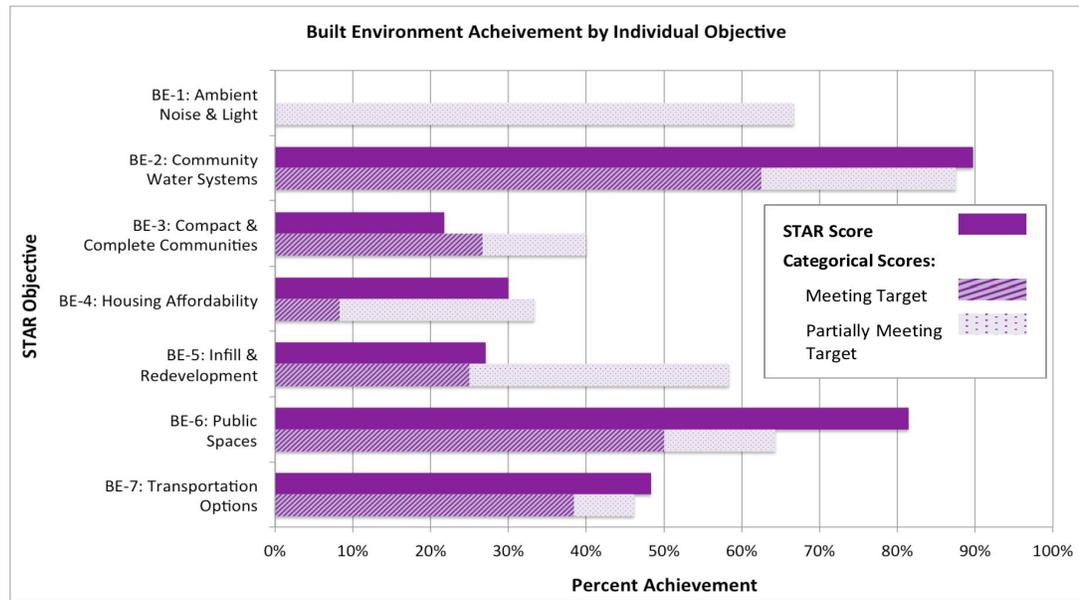
### OVERALL PERFORMANCE:

The Bay Area community has reached its second highest level of achievement in this goal area. This success will likely continue into the future with long-term operations and investment programs, as well as recently funded planning projects.

### OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT:

<b>STAR Score</b>	<b>45%</b>
<b>Categorical Score</b>	<b>55%</b>
<i>Meeting/Exceeding Target</i>	29%
<i>Partially Meeting Target</i>	26%
<i>Does not meet target</i>	21%
<i>Pending</i>	13%
<i>Unable to evaluate or N/A</i>	12%

### ACHIEVEMENT BY OBJECTIVE:



### Notable Achievements:

**BE-2 Community Water Systems:** The community water sources are high quality, with very infrequent instances of excessive levels of contaminants, turbidity, and pathogens. Projected water availability is expected to meet projected demand through 2050, ensuring a secure water supply into the future. One area where the community is underperforming is in its efforts to increase water conservation and efficiency, particularly in regards to the support from the Water Board and city governments (see Climate & Energy for more information on this topic).

**BE-3 Compact & Complete Communities:** Three urban centers—Coos Bay downtown, North Bend downtown, and Empire—have been designated as urban renewal areas and thus have been targeted for investment programs. These areas naturally developed into compact areas with mixed uses offering housing options, groceries, entertainment, stores, and other basic services that help foster vibrant communities. As urban renewal projects continue, these areas will likely become even more central to their respective communities.

### *Areas for Improvement:*

**BE-1 Ambient Noise & Light:** Based on responses from city and county administrators, ambient noise and light has not received much attention from local governments. This issue may not currently be a priority due to the community's rural setting. However, a baseline assessment should still be done in order to ensure that ambient noise and light are indeed below thresholds. Particular attention should be paid to industrial areas along the Bay Area waterfront, where industrial operations are in close proximity to residential, commercial, and recreational zones.

**BE-4 Housing Affordability:** Housing costs are currently 45% or more of annual household income for nearly all households in the Bay Area community, including those earning the Area Median Income (AMI) and those earning 80% of the AMI. While there is subsidized affordable housing and other forms of assistance for individuals living in poverty, there is a lack of efforts to systematically expand affordable housing options for individuals with a middle to low socioeconomic status.

**BE-7 Transportation Options:** Plans that inventory bicycle, pedestrian, and transit options and set goals for future expansion are in place at the city and county levels. In addition, bicycle and pedestrian safety exceed targets. However, actual infrastructure for these transportation options remains quite limited, especially bicycle lanes and routes within and connecting urban centers. This situation is evidenced by the high percentage of individuals who drive to work rather than biking, walking, and/or using transit. Additionally, 100% of households— twice the target—spend 15% or more of annual household income on transportation costs, likely due to high gasoline prices. Focusing on implementing agency plans and increasing residents' use of these alternative options would improve transportation affordability.

## SUCCESS STORIES

### Water Quality Monitoring Network

*(BE-2 Community Water Systems)*

Several agencies and organizations conduct regular water quality monitoring at various sites throughout the estuary. The PCW has made an effort to inventory all of the environmental data collection that occurs throughout the Coos estuary by all entities, which has led to the creation of a map and online database. The Water Board monitors potable water sources and water levels. They produce annual reports for the public, but more frequent updates are available on the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality website. The South Slough Reserve



BE

operates a total of nine stations—five within South Slough and four in the upper part of the Coos estuary—as part of the System-Wide Monitoring Program to measure short-term variability and long-term changes in system characteristics to inform effective coastal zone management. The Confederated Tribes of the Coos, Lower Umpqua, and Siuslaw Indians maintain two stations and the Coquille Indian Tribe maintains one station, all in the middle Coos estuary area. The Coos Watershed Association maintains 11 stream gauging stations throughout the watershed where they collect continual discharge data and periodically collect other parameters. Data from all of these sites are available in report form, through the respective organization websites, or by request only. All of these efforts provide up-to-date and reliable information about conditions of the community’s water source, as well as the basis for many of its industries.

#### **Brownfield Development Taskforce**

*(BE-5 Infill & Redevelopment)*

The Coos estuary is home to a number of natural resource-based industries, including timber, fishing, and mining. Over time, these industries have left behind many inactive, underused, or abandoned properties known to have environmental contamination. Numerous brownfield sites have been identified throughout the county. Some have already been identified as promising sites for increasing opportunities for social interaction and recreation, including pedestrian walkways and bikeways (e.g., previous mill sites along Bay Area waterfront, old mining site off of Seven Devils Road). In 2013, the Coos County Public Health Department received a grant to establish a brownfield development taskforce with representatives from state and local agencies, local business interests, tribal entities, community organizations, and residents. The taskforce will work for a year to assess brownfield sites and neighboring communities, prioritize projects for development, and create a strategic plan. These activities will support the Infill & Redevelopment objective, an area where the Bay Area community is underachieving, but has significant potential for improvement.

## Climate & Energy

### GOAL:

Reduce climate impacts through adaptation and mitigation efforts and increase resource efficiency

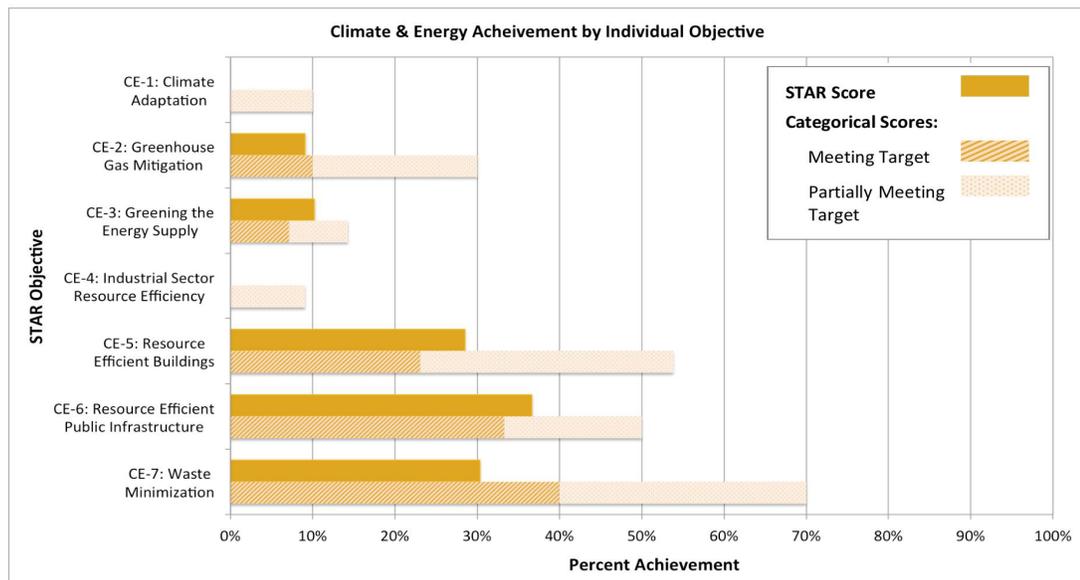
### OVERALL PERFORMANCE:

This goal area is the lowest achieving one out of the seven for the Bay Area community. Except for a few efforts that agencies are making—often in response to state mandates—as well as efforts by individual residents and businesses to improve energy efficiency, coordinated action is not being taken to address climate impacts and implement adaptation and mitigation strategies. It does not seem likely that such initiative will be taken by the local government in the near-term, unless it is required by state or federal regulations.

### OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT:

<b>STAR Score</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Categorical Score</b>	<b>32%</b>
<i>Meeting/Exceeding Target</i>	16%
<i>Partially Meeting Target</i>	16%
<i>Does not meet target</i>	54%
<i>Pending</i>	4%
<i>Unable to evaluate or N/A</i>	10%

### ACHIEVEMENT BY OBJECTIVE:



### Notable Achievements:

**CE-5/6 Resource Efficient Buildings and Public Infrastructure:** For the various evaluation measures regarding energy or water efficiency, city and county agencies have taken actions to increase efficiency in government buildings and public infrastructure. In some instances,

these efforts follow internal protocol to reduce costs when planning new construction or renovations, and in other instances they follow state building codes. Despite such efforts, there is a stark lack of locally initiated action to systematically increase resource efficiency in public infrastructure and all buildings.

**CE-7 Waste Minimization:** Coos County and the cities provide and/or contract out recycling services and collection of specialized waste products, such as household hazardous waste. They also hold special collection events throughout the year and cooperate with organizations and businesses throughout the region to collect certain recyclable products. An opportunity for improvement is in the solid waste management plan, which was created in 2006 and is very outdated according to county staff. An update of the plan should be completed and specific and waste generation reduction and waste recovery targets should be set to align with the state mandated waste recovery goal of 30% by 2050. Local targets and a strategic plan will be especially important given that between 1992 and 2012, Coos County increased its total and per capita waste generated.

#### *Areas for Improvement:*

**CE-1/2 Climate Adaptation and GHG Mitigation:** The City of Coos Bay reports considering GHG emissions for new facility projects and is considering improving its facilities to better prepare for climate change threats. However, both cities and the county report no action or consideration for almost all evaluation measures related to climate adaptation and GHG mitigation. Addressing climate change is a core component of STAR framework and the lack of attention paid to these objectives indicate a significant gap in community preparation for future changes.

**CE-4 Industrial Energy Efficiency:** Non-residential energy use, which includes industrial energy use, has decreased between 2011 and 2013—progress that is on-track to meet STAR’s goal of 80% reduction by 2050. However, it is unclear whether the industrial sector was indeed the source of this reduction. Furthermore, the reduction is not driven by local policy and thus offers no guarantee that the industrial sector will continue to make these reductions in the future. Collaboration with the industrial sector to set targets and identify strategies and incentives to meet those targets is an important step to take to make progress in this objective.

## SUCCESS STORIES

### **Transforming Waste into Energy**

(CE-7 Waste Minimization)

Coos County contracts with Rogue Disposal & Recycling, based in southern Oregon, to manage its solid waste. Coos County waste is put into the company’s Dry Creek Landfill where it decomposes, naturally producing landfill gas, nearly 50% of which is methane. The methane gas is then removed from the landfill and burned in two 20-cylinder CAT engines to power two 1.6-megawatt (MW) generators. This process produces 3.2 MW of energy daily—enough electricity to power approximately 3,000 homes each day in the Rogue Valley. Coos County waste represents nearly 10% of the total municipal solid waste, generating about 0.3 MW of energy daily. While the choice to contract with Rogue Disposal & Recycling and support the waste-to-energy system does not make a very big impact on the community’s STAR score, it is an important step for supporting waste minimization efforts and incorporating sustainable thinking into the waste stream system.

CE

### **EmPowering Residents to Conserve Energy**

*(CE-5 Resource Efficient Buildings)*

Oregon Coast Community Action (ORCCA) has been a leader in increasing energy and water efficiency for local residents, particularly those struggling to manage their energy costs. ORCCA's EmPower program works with motivated households to assess their energy use in the context of their other lifestyle costs and budget, understand their energy bill, lower their energy consumption, and reduce their energy costs by up to \$200 per year. For EmPower participants, as well as other low-income households, ORCCA audits homes to identify and implement effective strategies to conserve energy and lower costs. In 2011-2012, ORCCA helped 194 households through the weatherization program and completed furnace replacements in 51 homes. In addition, ORCCA and a team of AmeriCorps volunteers piloted an educational program focused on energy and water conservation in 3 elementary schools, tutoring 302 students in 23 classes.

## Economy & Jobs

### GOAL:

Create equitably shared prosperity and access to quality jobs

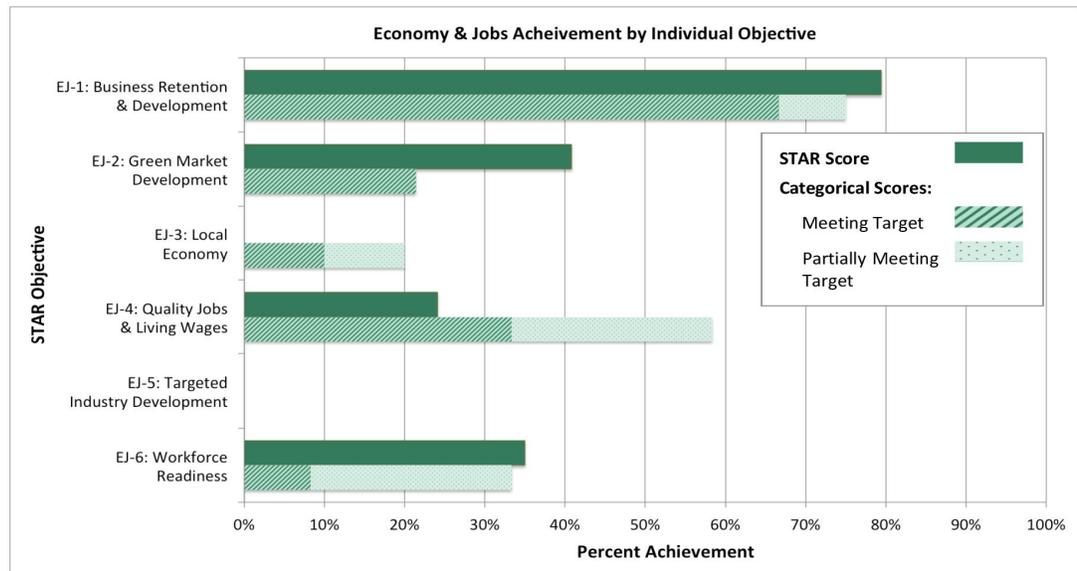
### OVERALL PERFORMANCE:

This goal is an area where the Bay Area community has attained a moderate degree of achievement. The community is excelling in certain objectives, but is taking nearly no action at all in others. Recent initiatives, however, show promise for more substantial progress in the near future.

### OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT:

<b>STAR Score</b>	<b>32%</b>
<b>Categorical Score</b>	<b>35%</b>
<i>Meeting/Exceeding Target</i>	24%
<i>Partially Meeting Target</i>	11%
<i>Does not meet target</i>	29%
<i>Pending</i>	17%
<i>Unable to evaluate or N/A</i>	19%

### ACHIEVEMENT BY OBJECTIVE:



### Notable Achievements:

**EJ-1 Business Retention & Development:** A wealth of resources has been injected into the local economy, particularly in enterprise districts where special investments and assistance is often directed. There is frequent collaboration between agencies and the business community, such as in the Bay Area Chamber of Commerce and the Coos Bay Downtown Association. These efforts are reflected in increasing total annual sales in the community over time. However, numbers on employment and business establishments are not as strong, indicating an area that could use more attention.

**EJ-4 Quality Jobs & Living Wages:** Cities and the county support living wages and family-friendly workplaces for employees and contractors. In addition, agencies maintain collective bargaining relationships with public employee labor organizations. Despite this support from local government, the community's median household income and the percentage of households that are economically self-sufficient are lagging behind targets, suggesting that other employers in the community are not matching the efforts of city and county agencies.

#### *Areas for Improvement:*

**EJ-2 Green Market Development:** The cities and county have not taken the initiative to foster the development of green industries through internal procedures or external policies and regulations. Without this support, the growth of a green market is slow. Nevertheless, community businesses and residences have undertaken efforts on their own by purchasing renewable energy through Pacific Power's Blue Sky Program, installing electric vehicle (EV) charging stations in coordination with state efforts, and a green business recognition program through the Bay Area Chamber of Commerce (see Success Story below). Local agencies could build on these initial grassroots efforts to provide more strategic green market development in the community.

**EJ-3 Local Economy:** Indicators show a weak local economy and few efforts by city and county agencies to boost self-reliance, such as incentives, policies, or support services for local producers. There is potential for progress with a new initiative by the South Coast Development Corporation (SCDC). SCDC is conducting an assessment of the local economy with particular regard for traded sector businesses that bring "new dollars" to the local economy. The community could leverage SCDC's efforts to launch more initiatives for economic localization.

**EJ-5 Targeted Industry Development:** This objective has essentially been devoid of any action, with the exception of SCDC's local economic assessment that will ultimately lead to identification of targeted industry clusters. With this initial work, the community can move forward with strategic planning to build on existing strengths and expand related sectors to promote the clusters and fuel innovation.

#### SUCCESS STORY

##### **Bay Area Chamber of Commerce Sustainability Award**

*(EJ-2 Green Market Development)*

The Bay Area Chamber of Commerce began its Sustainability Award in 2011 to recognize local businesses and organizations that have taken steps to incorporate more sustainable practices. About five awards are given out each year at the Chamber's Wednesday Business Luncheons, where recipients give a presentation about their efforts to reduce their impact on the environment. The program has recognized 9 businesses and organizations thus far, many of which have third-party sustainability certifications. The Chamber's Sustainability Award is an excellent showcase of local companies, many of which are based on natural resources, successful operating with the environment and the community in mind. This program has the potential to provide a foundation for a strategic plan to further develop green markets, building on the success of these organizations.

## Education, Arts, & Community

### GOAL:

Empower vibrant, educated, connected, and diverse communities

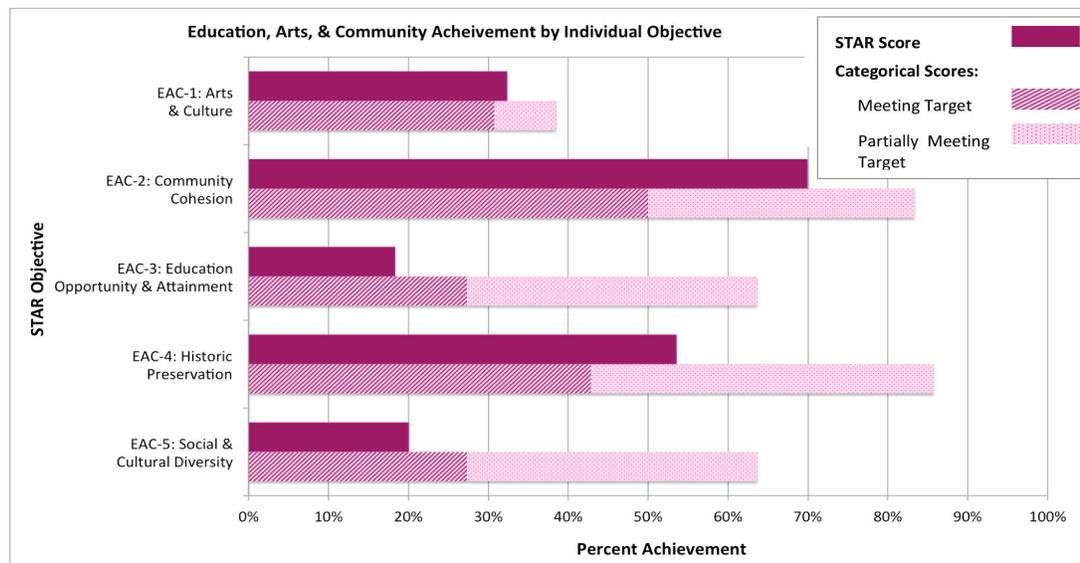
### OVERALL PERFORMANCE:

This goal area is the second-lowest achieving one for the Bay Area community. There are numerous venues and cultural opportunities that bring the community together, but government leadership to invest in art and cultural industries is lacking. In addition, educational indicators point to an area where the community is significantly under-performing.

### OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT:

<b>STAR Score</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Categorical Score</b>	<b>56%</b>
<i>Meeting/Exceeding Target</i>	<i>33%</i>
<i>Partially Meeting Target</i>	<i>23%</i>
<i>Does not meet target</i>	<i>18%</i>
<i>Pending</i>	<i>21%</i>
<i>Unable to evaluate or N/A</i>	<i>5%</i>

### ACHIEVEMENT BY OBJECTIVE:



### Notable Achievements:

**EAC-2 Community Cohesion:** The community has an abundance of venues, services, and events that support community building, especially in proportion to the population size, and the cities and county are active in supporting these venues and services. Various leadership programs engage both adults and youth to build social capital and further develop existing strengths to ultimately support the community. One area that could be improved is formalizing government support for community building efforts (e.g., farmers' markets, neighborhood planning) through policies and codes.

**EAC-4 Historic Preservation:** The Bay Area community has a large number of historic sites, many of which are listed on the National Historic Register. The City of Coos Bay has two established historic districts—the Waterfront Heritage District and the Hollering Place District—that have design standards intended to preserve historic buildings and/or character. Coos Bay is considering establishing a historic commission and becoming a Certified Local Government, a recognition awarded by the National Park Service. Fewer steps have been taken by the City of North Bend and Coos County. Both cities provide financial incentives for preservation, particularly for façade improvements, through their urban renewal agencies.

#### *Areas for Improvement:*

**EAC-1 Arts and Culture:** Although the Coos Art Museum and other cultural venues are active, local public support in the form of incentives and policies for creative industries and professionals are lacking. There are several pieces of public artwork in the Bay Area, but new public art pieces are rarely commissioned and neither city nor the county have made a commitment to financial supporting the arts, such as a percent-for-art ordinance. Furthermore, art education in schools has been whittled down and no comprehensive, district-wide programming is in place. These efforts could be boosted to improve performance for this objective.

**EAC-3 Educational Opportunity & Attainment:** While there are several examples of important opportunities and programs in place that boost educational achievement, such as a robust Head Start program through Oregon Coast Community Action and career pathway opportunities in the Coos Bay School District and at SWOCC, performance measures do not demonstrate significant improvement. For the three key evaluation metrics—3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading proficiency, 4-year adjusted cohort graduation rate, and graduation rate for selected underperforming groups—none of the three districts (Coos Bay, North Bend, and Bandon) meets the benchmarks. In fact, in most cases there is a decrease in achievement over last three years. These statistics must be taken into account when planning educational strategies as well as public spending within districts.

## SUCCESS STORY

### **Building Local Leaders**

*(EAC-2 Community Cohesion)*

Several leadership programs sponsored by local and regional organizations provide opportunities for adults and youth to acquire skills, learn community development principles, and form social relationships that they can use to improve the community. These programs ultimately create a network of residents who have the tools to work together and successfully make progress in the community. The Ford Institute Leadership Program, sponsored by the Ford Family Foundation, has been active since 2005 and has engaged 186 adults and youth in total. Leadership Coos is a program run by the Bay Area Chamber of Commerce and engages 34 adult participants each year for a 9-month program to build awareness around community activities. Programs specifically for youth include Leadership for Bay Area Youth (L-BAY) through Oregon Coast Arts, the Keystone Program at the Boys & Girls Club that specifically works with disadvantaged youth, and the Rotary Youth Leadership Camp. These three youth programs have engaged about 88 youth total from 2011 to 2013.

## Equity and Empowerment

### GOAL:

Ensure equity, inclusion, and access to opportunity for all residents

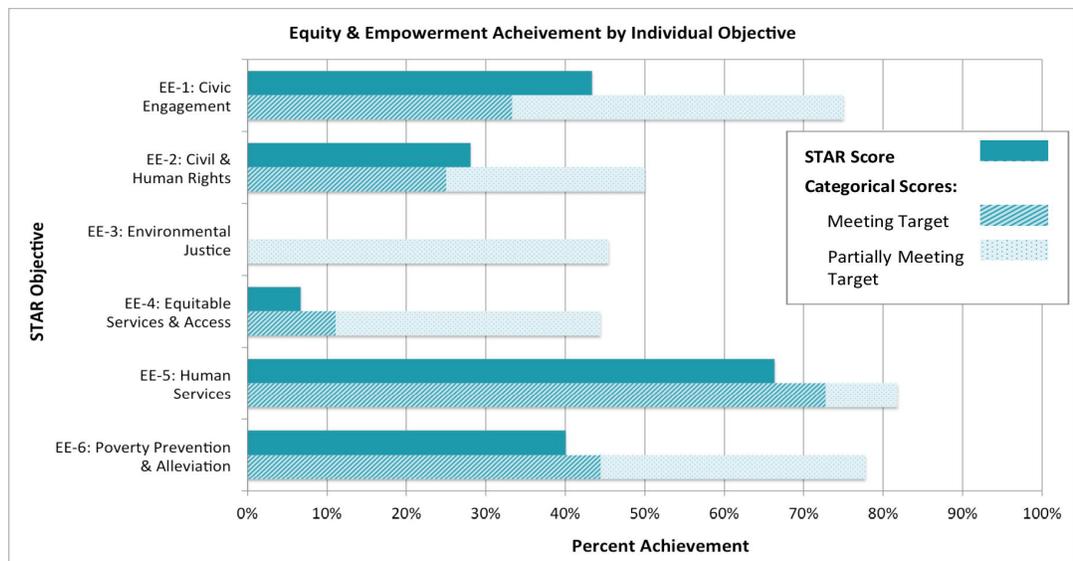
### OVERALL PERFORMANCE:

This goal area is a middle-achieving one for the Bay Area community. While basic support services are available and agencies do a fair job of engaging residents in governmental processes, attention has not been adequately paid to evaluating and ensuring equity of services. Furthermore, despite the services provided to low-income residents, poverty remains a problem in the community.

### OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT:

<b>STAR Score</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>Categorical Score</b>	<b>62%</b>
<i>Meeting/Exceeding Target</i>	30%
<i>Partially Meeting Target</i>	32%
<i>Does not meet target</i>	15%
<i>Pending</i>	10%
<i>Unable to evaluate or N/A</i>	14%

### ACHIEVEMENT BY OBJECTIVE:



### Notable Achievements:

**EE-1 Civic Engagement:** The cities and county offer regular opportunities for elected officials and top government staff to meet with residents to hear their concerns and discuss issues. The cities also have volunteer programs for residents to support government activities. Both Coos Bay and North Bend high schools usually hold mock voting programs during presidential elections, which complement the regular curriculum about democracy and the electoral process. One area that represents an opportunity for improvement is in voter turnout and voter registration, which has decreased over the past three presidential election

cycles. In addition, there is a lack of data on volunteerism and residents' sense of empowerment—two evaluation measures that the community may be achieving, but cannot be determined at this time.

**EE-5 Human Services:** The local office of the Oregon Department of Human Services (DHS), in conjunction with ORCCA, provide a broad range of services for the public, from nutrition and housing assistance to child welfare. Many of the services they offer receive state funding and thus must follow state regulatory procedures. Both organizations conduct outreach about the services they provide, collaborate with other agencies and organizations, and have regular monitoring, reporting, and planning procedures. An area with potential for growth is attention to specific subsets of the population that are at risk of being underserved or may have limited access to services. The Coos County DHS office is currently assessing service to the Hispanic population, after which a similar assessment could be conducted for other groups.

#### *Areas for Improvement:*

**EE-4 Equitable Services & Access:** The City of Coos Bay has taken initial steps toward improving equitable access to services and facilities in the community, but comprehensive efforts are still lacking. Based on reports from city and county agencies, it appears that disparities in access and proximity to services and infrastructure have not been evaluated across diverse income levels and race/ethnicities. This type of assessment would be the first step to understand current conditions, identify population subgroups or geographic areas where there is a lack of services or limited access, and prioritize projects to improve access for all people.

**EE-6 Poverty Prevention & Alleviation:** There are a number of services available to community residents living in poverty. ORCCA and DHS are key providers of those services, including essential needs and child development programs. South Coast Business Employment Corporation (SCBEC), as the Worksource Oregon provider for the south coast region, offers job training and other forms of support for residents seeking employment. Despite these services, the county-wide poverty rate has been increasing since 2000 for the population at large, as well as for the following subgroups: Hispanic, American Indian/Alaskan Native, and children under 18. While these numbers alone do not explain the entire situation, they are important indicators of the situation facing residents. If existing programs are not having an impact on the percentage of people living in poverty, it may be fruitful to examine the effectiveness of the programs and consider alternative strategies.

## SUCCESS STORY

### **Training for Successful Careers**

*(EE-6 Poverty Prevention & Alleviation)*

The South Coast Business Employment Corporation (SCBEC) is a local leader in preparing residents for jobs and careers. SCBEC is the Worksource Oregon provider for the South Coast region and is a member of The Oregon Consortium and Oregon Workforce Alliance (TOC/OWA), a public-private partnership among 24 rural Oregon counties. SCBEC offers various workshops, resources, job-specific training, youth employment opportunities, and other forms of support for residents seeking employment for the first time or as a returnee to the workforce. SCBEC also offers assessment trainings, hiring resources, and other services to employers. All of these services support a healthy workforce and are a key indicator of a sustainable economy and community.

## Health & Safety

### GOAL:

Strengthen communities to be healthy, resilient, and safe places for residents and businesses

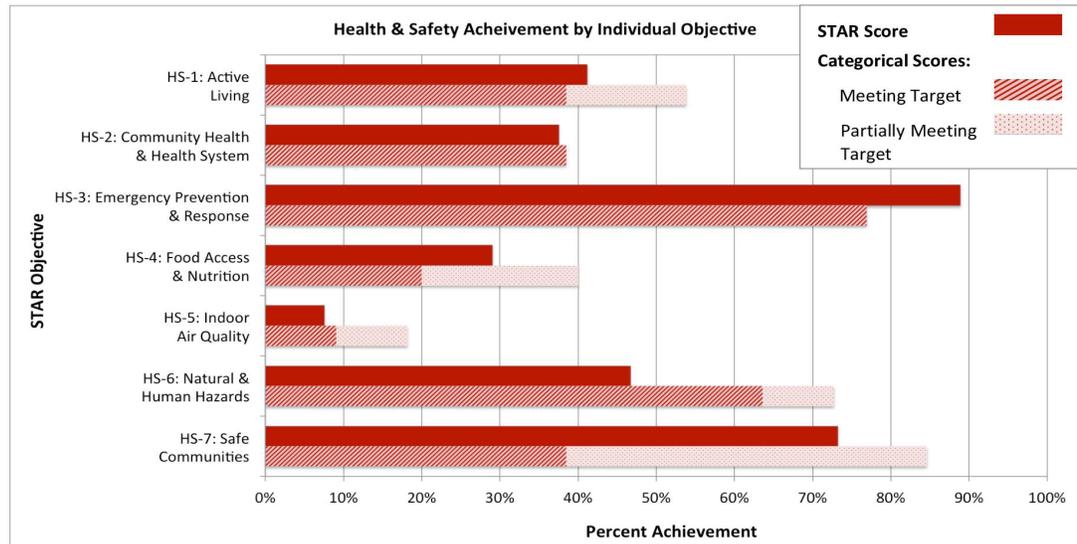
### OVERALL PERFORMANCE:

This is the top-performing goal area for the Bay Area community. It has significant achievements across the board. With the exception of indoor air quality, developing programs and upcoming actions will strengthen the community's performance even more.

### OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT:

<b>STAR Score</b>	<b>48%</b>
<b>Categorical Score</b>	<b>51%</b>
<i>Meeting/Exceeding Target</i>	39%
<i>Partially Meeting Target</i>	12%
<i>Does not meet target</i>	35%
<i>Pending</i>	13%
<i>Unable to evaluate or N/A</i>	0%

### ACHIEVEMENT BY OBJECTIVE:



### Notable Achievements:

**HS-3 Emergency Prevention & Response:** The Bay Area community has identified emergency prevention and response as a top priority, and as a result, has made remarkable achievements in this area. Fire protection ratings, emergency response times, and compliance with federal standards are all meeting targets. There continues to be extensive cooperation throughout region for emergency planning and preparation, with regular updates and staff trainings. The county has active Medical Reserve Corps (MRC) and Community Emergency Response Teams (CERT) programs. Given that emergency planning is a common concern at the state level, as well as the increasing threat of natural hazards to the coastal community (see section below), the Bay Area community will likely continue to

excel in this objective into the future.

**HS-6 Natural & Human Hazards:** The city and county agencies have developed extensive plans for natural and human hazard management, based on all-hazard vulnerability assessments. Zoning and building codes limit development in hazard prone areas—particularly floodplain zones. Agencies regularly conduct outreach to raise awareness about hazards and they themselves upgrade, or are considering upgrading, facilities to meet higher standards and serve as shelters or command centers during. One area that deserves further attention is data on the community’s resilience to hazards in order to gauge whether the plans and actions have made an impact.

**HS-7 Safe Communities:** Coos County violent crime rates are far below national targets, although for the size of the community, the Coos County agencies consider them to be twice the desired rate (Coos County Health Improvement Plan 2013, in reference to rates between 2007 and 2009). School violence rates in both Coos Bay and North Bend districts do not meet established targets. Nevertheless, city and county agencies have established violence prevention, suppression, and enforcement programs. Some agencies have offender reentry programs and a safe communities strategic plan in place.

#### *Areas for Improvement:*

**HS-1 Active Living:** Coos County does not meet targets for physically activity among adults or youth. While there are plans to make active living a more central component to community development—the cities and county’s respective transportation plans and the county’s Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)—and projects are being undertaken to improve pedestrian and bicycling infrastructure, the actual outcomes remain minimal. As several of the aforementioned plans note, active modes of transportation and regular (daily) use of those modes is very limited. In sum, this area has a lot of potential and progress will likely be made as plans continue to be implemented in the near future.

**HS-2 Community Health & Health System:** At the county level, the community is not meeting benchmarks for multiple important health indicators. On the whole, Coos County has a low ranking among other counties throughout the state for many indicators. However, the county public health department has made recent progress with the recent Community Health Assessment and associated Community Health Improvement Plan (2013-2016). As this plan is implemented, health indicators will likely improve over the next five to ten years.

**HS-5 Indoor Air Quality:** This area has received very little attention from city and county agencies. While Coos County Public Health receives indoor air quality (IAQ) complaints from tenants, they do not actively solicit them. The number of tenant complaints they have received has increased over the past three years. Additionally, there are no inspections to enforce IAQ standards, no assistance available to homeowners to improve IAQ, and no outreach to raise awareness among the community. The lack of efforts in this area seems concerning, especially given the frequency of mold in the coastal climate. A small degree of initiative taken has the potential to have a big impact on performance in this objective.

#### SUCCESS STORY

##### **Building a Local Food System**

*(HS-4 Food Access & Nutrition)*

The Bay Area community already has an active farmers’ market in downtown Coos Bay, a community garden, and multiple community supported agriculture (CSA) options for residents to

HS

directly connect with regional farms. In 2013, Coos County FEAST (Food, Education, Agriculture, Solutions, Together) held a county-wide discussion about the local food system. In response to the outcomes of this brainstorming event, the South Coast Development Council (SCDC) partnered with the Wild Rivers Coast Alliance and AmeriCorps to carry out a community food assessment (CFA) for Coos County. The CFA evaluates current conditions impacting residents' access to healthy food and factors influencing the strength of the local food industry. Results from the CFA will help direct future efforts to increase food security, make healthy food accessible and affordable to all residents, and connect producers with schools, restaurants, grocers, and individual consumers to build the local food system.

ORCCA has taken steps to strengthen local food connections. The organization has started a farm-to-preschool program to bring fresh food to children and families served by South Coast Head Start. Valley Flora Farm, located in Langlois, was the first producer to work with ORCCA on this program in 2014. Efforts like these not only support community health, but boost the local economy and increase the resource efficiency of the food system.

## Natural Systems

### GOAL:

Protect and restore the natural resource base upon which life depends

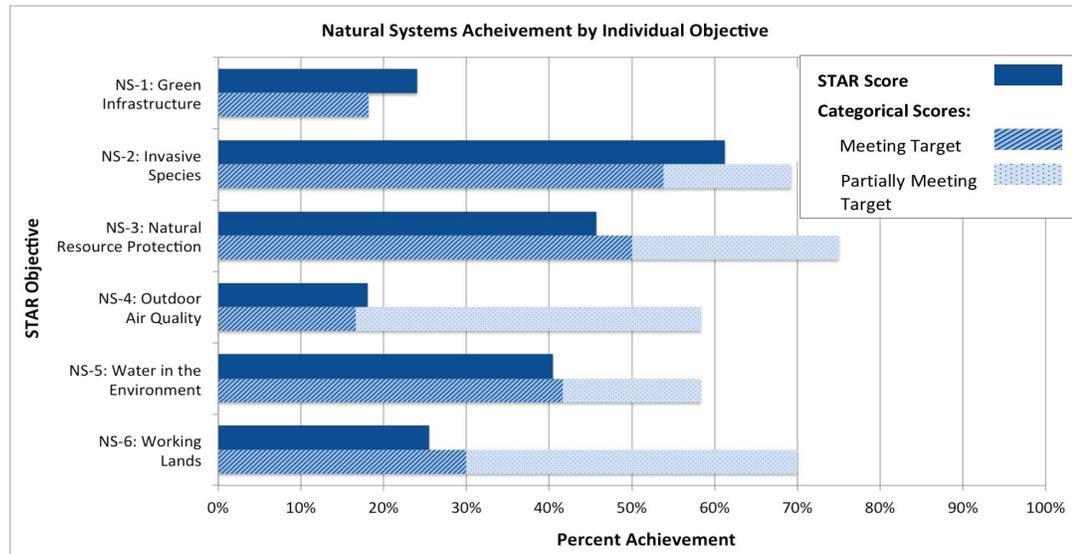
### OVERALL PERFORMANCE:

This goal area is a middle-performing one for the Bay Area community. Significant strides have been made to address many components, but much of the progress has been achieved through grassroots efforts and/or state or federal-driven regulation. Local regulations and incentives through city and county agencies would be the logical next step to assess the achievements that have been made and continue making further progress.

### OVERALL ACHIEVEMENT:

<b>STAR Score</b>	<b>35%</b>
<b>Categorical Score</b>	<b>43%</b>
<i>Meeting/Exceeding Target</i>	26%
<i>Partially Meeting Target</i>	17%
<i>Does not meet target</i>	24%
<i>Pending</i>	30%
<i>Unable to evaluate or N/A</i>	2%

### ACHIEVEMENT BY OBJECTIVE:



### Notable Achievements:

**NS-2 Invasive Species:** The community has made significant reductions in invasive species populations within the Coos watershed. On the county level, the Coos County Cooperative Weed Management Area has a long-term management plan to address invasives, and the County Weed Board provides incentives for landowners to reduce weeds. The Coos Watershed Association has an extensive invasive/native plant program with restoration, volunteer engagement, and public outreach. City and county agencies report using native or

non-invasive species in landscaping, but the next step would be to enact local regulations prohibiting certain species that have been identified as key problems in the area.

**NS-3 Natural Resource Protection:** There is extensive restoration, conservation, education, and monitoring of natural systems in the Coos estuary area, led by the Coos Watershed Association, South Slough NERR, tribal organizations, Coos SWCD, agencies, and other entities. County planning and zoning promote natural resource protection, particularly in regards to shorelines and wetlands, in accordance with state land use planning goals. However, the region is lacking local targets for conservation, with a coordinating monitoring system and local incentives (rather than state or federal) for conservation.

#### *Areas for Improvement:*

**NS-1 Green Infrastructure:** The Bay Area is fortunate to be naturally endowed with extensive green space, and the community has done a good job of preserving these areas. However, there has been little effort to encourage green infrastructure within the built environment in order to extend the benefits into the urban setting as well. There have been a few isolated projects where rain gardens and other green infrastructure strategies have been implemented, such as in the LEED-certified Coos Bay Fire Station and the recent Ford Building renovation, but more comprehensive and government-led action has yet to be seen. Creating plans, establishing incentives, and working with private landowners to incorporate green infrastructure in new and existing developments would help boost achievement in this area.

**NS-4 Outdoor Air Quality:** Very little data on air quality is available at the county level, and essentially no data is available at the city level. Fine particulate matter (PM 2.5), the single parameter that is available for a consistent period of time due to a special federal program, increases slightly from 2009-2011, although those levels were lower than the levels in 2003. However, air pollution is not considered a significant health issue for the county, as reported in the Coos County Health Improvement Plan (2013). Accordingly, the cities and county have taken very few steps to address outdoor air quality. While outdoor air quality may not be an issue at this time, it is important to maintain current data on several parameters to ensure early detection of increasing trends and quick mitigation action in response.

**NS-6 Working Lands:** In the forestry industry, all harvesters are required to use BMPs to be in compliance with the Oregon Forest Practices Act, and many harvesters have taken additional steps to become certified in sustainable practices. There are active youth crew programs that assist mostly agricultural and some forestry landowners in implementing BMPs. For agricultural lands, a multijurisdictional agricultural water quality management plan establishes required conditions for farms, ranches, and other agricultural lands to protect water quality, although specific BMPs are only recommended, not required, for landowners to implement in order to meet regulations, and there appears to be no tracking system to know whether managers have adopted BMPs. It would be valuable to begin by inventorying agricultural managers to assess the current situation.

## SUCCESS STORY

### Local Youth Helping Farmers and Fish

(NS-6 Working Lands)

Various youth crew programs have been periodically active for a number of years in the Bay Area community. The Northwest Youth Corps has a history of recruiting youth from the local area, the

NS

Bureau of Land Management has hired youth during the summer to assist in their projects, and AmeriCorps teams have assisted with local projects sporadically. Additionally, in 2011 the Coos Watershed Association began youth programs that address riparian restoration practices and other BMPs—the Master Watershed Stewards Youth Program and Oregon Youth Conservation Corps (OYCC) summer program—that received assistance from individual AmeriCorps members from 2011-2014. All of these crews offer relevant and satisfying work experience for youth that can help them succeed in high school, college, and beyond. The work they achieve help landowners implement BMPs that they may otherwise not be able to, and provide important benefits for habitats, salmonids, and ecosystems.

## Discussion

### Limitations to the Evaluation

**Scoring System:** The STAR assessment is at once comprehensive and definite, which presents both opportunities and challenges. The opportunities lie in the ability to synthesize a very broad range of data into digestible scores that can be easily analyzed and compared. The challenges are present in the tendency toward “all-or-nothing” scoring; aside from the few instances of gradual credit, most evaluation measures award all or none of the points available. It is important to read the STAR scores in the assessment with these circumstances in mind. In addition, it is helpful to use the categorical scoring system to learn more nuanced elements of the community’s current conditions. Finally, the entire STAR assessment—including the STAR score and

categorical scores—should be read as one component of the entire socioeconomic analysis in Coos Estuary Inventory Project.

**Data Availability:** As mentioned in the method section above, some evaluation measures could not be given a score due to a data gap. These measures were noted with a “Future” or “Pending” status. These data gaps were primarily due to two reasons: limited or no data collected by the relevant agency or organization, and inability to fully collect the data and complete the analysis given time constraints on the project. In the latter case, time was often an issue because of disparate data sources and limited data availability, requiring more extensive data collection. The evaluation measures marked for future evaluation only represent 8% of the total.

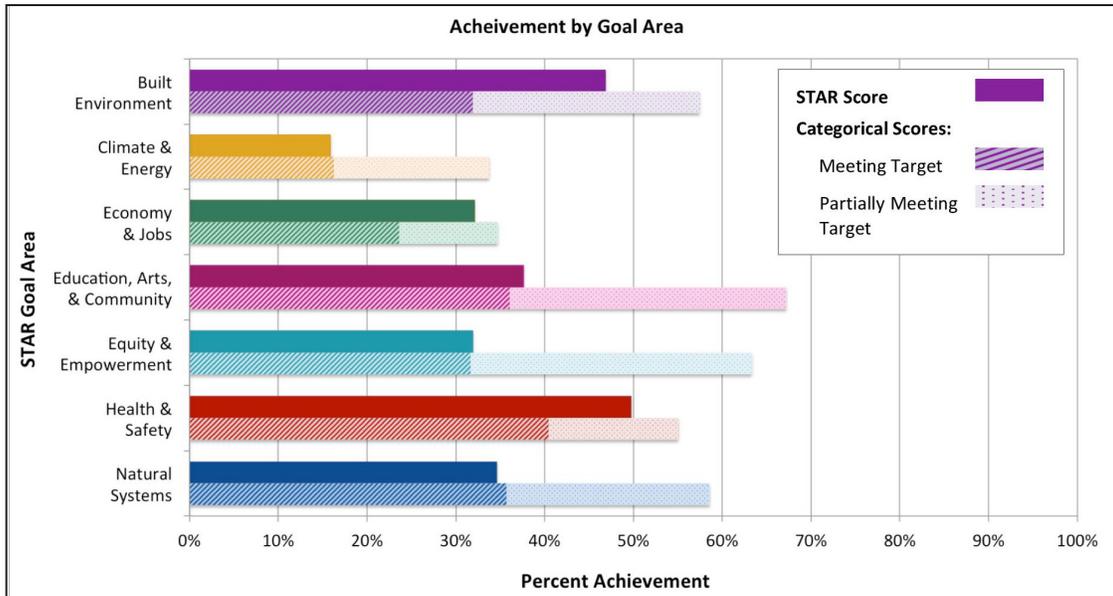


Figure 6. Achievement scores (STAR and categorical) by goal area for the Bay Area community.

***These measures do not count negatively against the STAR and categorical scores, and thus are not considered to compromise the integrity of the STAR assessment results and conclusions.***

#### Overall Current Conditions

The Bay Area community has moderate achievement in most goal areas of the STAR Rating System. As can be seen in Figure 8, the STAR scores and categorical scores differ slightly; in each goal area, the STAR score is less than the combined categorical score of meeting/exceeding or partially meeting targets.

As has been discussed in other sections of this report, the categorical score provides a more nuanced evaluation of the community's current progress in each evaluation measure. Therefore, the composition of the categorical score varies and it does not always correlate to the STAR score. The following sections describe the community's level of achievement in each goal area.

#### *High Achievement*

The Bay Area community is excelling in two categories: Built Environment and Health and Safety. The high achievement of 45-50% (STAR score) in these goal areas appears to be a result of several factors:

**1. The STAR Rating System objectives correspond with priority issues in the community.** Both community residents and local agencies agree on these priorities and give them adequate and consis-

tent attention to make progress toward goals. One example of such a priority is having a clean and healthy water source. Steps have been taken to ensure that the community's water sources will meet the projected demand and due consideration has been given to reduce any environmental impact from extracting water from the environment.

- 2. These objectives align with the community's inherent strengths.** The community is naturally endowed with abundant natural resources and green space. Its rural setting promotes less crowding, less pollution, and less of a likelihood for conflicts among people and with the environment. These strengths have served the community well in reaching many benchmarks and have helped preserve air and water quality.
- 3. These areas receive adequate funding to support their progress.** Since many of the high achieving evaluation measures are often priorities or mandates of local or state agencies, they are often well-funded. Financial support is a vital element to realizing outcomes in these goal areas; even a high priority issue cannot be acted on if adequate financial support is lacking for staff time and other needs.

There are several upcoming and ongoing projects in the Built Environment and Health and Safety goal areas, which bodes well for the future. As such projects are implemented, performance in these areas will likely improve

even further, and they will continue to be in the highest tier of achievement.

### *Moderate Achievement*

The Bay Area community is performing moderately, with STAR scores of 30-35%, in four goal areas: Economy and Jobs; Education, Arts, and Community; Equity and Empowerment; and Natural Systems. The community is achieving objectives when conditions are similar to those for the high achievement category, listed above. When targets are not being met, there seem to be one or more of the following factors involved:

- 1. The issue is not a priority for the community.** In some cases, it appears that the topic is perceived to be less relevant to the community's situation, potentially in regards to the rural setting and small population size. In these and other cases, there is no mandate by a local or state agency, allowing certain issues to receive less attention by residents and decision-makers. One example of the former case is the lack of green infrastructure in the urban setting (Natural Systems, Objective 1: Green Infrastructure). While there are plenty of spaces where people can access nature and enjoy the outdoors in less developed areas within the city and in close vicinity to its urban boundaries, the downtown and more developed areas have few instances of significant green infrastructure, or infrastructure created with an explicit purpose to provide natural benefits, such as water management through permeable surfaces or localized cooling through green roofs. This disparity may be due in part to the abundance of green space (e.g., parks, hiking trails) in the outer zones.
- 2. There is a lack of funding to support initiatives.** As noted in the previous section, adequate funding is necessary to implement plans and produce results. In certain evaluation measures, the topic may have been identified as an area of concern or interest, either informally among community members or formally in government meetings. However, lack of or limited funds prohibits any action from being taken. Even if the issue is one of measurable concern for the community, little or no financial support lowers its priority level below other needs that are more likely to secure support. One instance of this issue is with arts education in schools, which has suffered in recent years as public school funding declines (Education, Arts, and Community, Objective 1: Arts and Culture).
- 3. Steps have been taken, but without making measurable progress.** The community may have taken steps to address certain issues, and in some cases robust programming is in place to support the community. However, the statistics or quantifiable indicators of progress in these areas, which that would theoretically be positively affected by such actions, do not show significant improvement, and sometimes show a decline in conditions. A notable example of this scenario is in the broad range of services

provided for individuals living in poverty to aid them in managing finances and finding employment, and yet the increase in poverty levels in Coos County over recent years (Equity and Empowerment, Objective 6: Poverty Prevention and Alleviation).

- 4. The timing was not favorable for evaluation.** For some evaluation measures, the community may be taking preliminary steps to explore the topic or it may be an emerging topic of conversation among residents and leaders. However, no notable action or outcomes have been observed or reported at the time of evaluation. Some of these measures that are undergoing early stages of planning or programming were marked for future evaluation or an update, such as is the case with targeted industry development that will be happening in the next couple of years, led by the South Coast Development Council (Economy and Jobs, Objective 5: Targeted Industry Development).
- 5. There is a shift in the political or cultural climate creating unfavorable conditions.** In some cases, there has been a history of action taken by certain entities in the community or at least initial steps toward taking action. However, a recent change in leadership or circumstances created a climate within the organization, community, or funding sources that is less favorable for pursuing plans any further. For example, the former county health department director had initiated efforts to begin a health impact assessment

(HIA) program (a positive indicator for public health), which lost its momentum when she retired. In such instances, the community may have to wait until there is another change that shifts the climate back toward more favorable conditions.

#### *Low Achievement*

The Bay Area community has considerably poor performance in Climate and Energy, with an achievement rate of only 15% (STAR score). All of the factors listed under the moderate achievement section affect this area as well, but a fundamental reason is that climate adaptation, greenhouse gas mitigation, and resource efficiency has not been identified as a local priority with comprehensive and systematic action planning. The few efforts that have been made are mostly a product of state mandates. It is apparent that initial conversations have started on one or more of the Climate and Energy topics, particularly in the context of emergency preparedness and sea level rise. As climate change effects are felt more strongly and with potential federal regulations limiting carbon emissions in the near future, these conversations may become more central to local and regional community planning.

## Key Findings

1. **The Bay Area community needs to have sufficient political, cultural, and financial support in order to make progress on existing and emerging priorities.**

As the areas of high, moderate, and low achievement indicate, it is not only important for issues to be recognized by the local community members and leaders as matters that require attention, but it is also important for funders and investors—including state and federal agencies and the business community—to prioritize the issues in their strategic plans to direct funding toward those local needs. If an issue lacks a piece of this puzzle, progress will be greatly hindered. The Bay Area community can be strategic by identifying missing pieces of support, planning to secure them, and being willing to put certain issues on hold when support is unlikely.

2. **The Bay Area community may benefit from anticipating new state and federal regulations and responding swiftly, emerging at the forefront to assume a leadership role among rural communities across the state and nation.**

In some cases, the Bay Area community responded to mandates from state or federal agencies and in doing so met or made progress toward STAR targets. However, there are instances in which the Bay Area community has not met targets and lags behind other communities. Since regulations take time to form and become institutionalized, communities could anticipate them and preemptively plan to meet the likely requirements. Furthermore, if it is a particularly salient topic in the community, they could prioritize it to be a central component of their strategic plans. Such foresight has proven advantageous in the business sector, particularly in regards to environmental regulations. For example, many timber harvesters in the Bay Area community not only meet the rules of the Forest Practices Act, but they have taken additional steps to become certified through a sustainable forestry program. Such recognition indicates their leadership in the industry to partners and consumers alike. By taking action early and prominently, the Bay Area community could turn a top-down mandate into an opportunity for excellence.

3. **The Bay Area community should continue to leverage its rural location, but must remain alert to problems that may be masked by the characteristics of the rural landscape.**

A small and somewhat dispersed population has limited development in the Bay Area community compared to more urban areas, resulting in several benefits, including easy access to natural spaces, cleaner water bodies, and low violent crime rates. However, the amenities of the rural location may provide a misleading estimation of current conditions. For example, noise and light pollution seem to be a non-issue, but until ambient noise and light levels are measured, the community will not know actual exposure levels and whether certain neighborhoods are more exposed than others. In addition, although there is an abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities, adult and youth are not meeting the benchmarks for active lifestyles, likely due to urban hubs (downtown Coos Bay, North Bend, Empire) less suitable to walking and biking. Such cases underscore the challenges of a rural community and the importance of attending all facets of the community—even those that appear stable.

## Future Directions

The STAR Rating System is a very powerful tool that can be used in many ways and at many stages in the community development process—from assessing current program strengths and weaknesses to identifying new priorities and monitoring program effective-

ness. For the local community, this STAR assessment could be valuable to city and county agencies, business and industry leaders, community-based organizations, and residents. There are several next steps the community could take using this STAR assessment.

1

### **Use the STAR Rating System to help shape community conversations and strategic planning efforts.**

STAR's comprehensive format enables leaders to examine various issues at once and see how they interact to boost the vitality of the community. Additionally, the broad coverage of topics not only appeals to a range of stakeholders' interests, it offers multiple entry points for stakeholders to become engaged, thus increasing participation in planning processes.

2

### **Build on the community's successes.**

The PCW community has made significant progress in many goal areas thanks to adequate attention, action, investment, and monitoring. With continued efforts to reassess programs and renew support for these issues, forward progress can continue into the future.

3

### **Turn areas of low achievement around.**

Using the STAR assessment, the PCW community could identify specific areas for improvement that are locally relevant—they should align with local goals and address local concerns. Then, the community could turn these targeted areas into priorities for the community, incorporating them into appropriate plans and initiatives and using them to secure and direct funding.

4

### **Leverage hidden strengths.**

It became clear through the STAR assessment that the PCW community has multiple strengths that go unused, such as the grassroots efforts that individual businesses are implementing to lower their environmental impact (see Success Story under Economy & Jobs). The community could identify these underutilized strengths and plan to leverage them to make progress toward goals and priorities.

### Pursuing STAR Certification

As noted above, the Coos Bay Area community has an impressive preliminary STAR score given its small population size. It is estimated that the community could receive 3-STAR certification if it pursued certification. If the community wanted to pursue certification, it would follow these steps:

1. Secure agency support. The STAR Reporting System requires extensive data from city and county agencies. Creating a memorandum of understanding or a similar agreement may help create more fluidity and efficiency in the assessment process and minimize any duplication of efforts. Establishing a formal partnership with the agencies can ease data requests and exchanges and potentially designate a portion of agency staff time to assist with completing the analysis for certain evaluation measures. Securing this level of support would be a critical step toward successfully completing the STAR assessment to the degree required for the certification process.
2. Identify coordinating organization and individuals. While the STAR assessment requires many entities to be involved, there should be a single leading entity and individuals to coordinate the project. This may be the Partnership for Coastal Watersheds, an offshoot of the PCW, or another body altogether.
3. Establish a working committee. Representatives from key agency departments, utilities, major industries, and community groups should be involved to help identify data sources, secure data, conduct analysis, and provide a degree of quality assurance/quality control of the data.
4. Coordinate with STAR leadership. The certification process will involve many steps that the staff from STAR Communities will assist with. They should be notified that the community would like to seek certification and they will help identify the path forward. Since the Bay Area community is unique in the STAR Rating System, in that it is neither a city or county agency but rather a community collaborative group, the STAR staff members will help the community navigate the appropriate next steps.

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This report also drew on the Communities, Lands & Waterways Data Source framework and description created by the PCW Committee, technical reviewers, and Data Source project staff.

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