



JAG FINAL LOCAL EVALUATION REPORT

SUMMARY FINDINGS

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March 30, 2018

Abstract: In 2015, the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office received funding through the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program. This report summarizes the evaluation findings for the three-year project. The purpose of the report is to determine whether the overall program (including each project component) was effective.

Acknowledgements

This report was made possible by funding from the Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant and in-kind support from Humboldt State University.

The California Center for Rural Policy would like to thank:

- Sheriff William Honsal, Humboldt County Sheriff's Office
- Lieutenant Bryan Quenell, Drug Task Force Commander, Humboldt County Sheriff's Office
- Sergeant Kerry Ireland, Special Services Division, Humboldt County Sheriff's Office
- Keri Furtado, Administrative Services Officer, Humboldt County Sheriff's Office
- Chelsea Gray, Senior Legal Office Assistant, Humboldt County Drug Task Force
- Paula Arrowsmith-Jones, Community Outreach Coordinator, North Coast Rape Crisis Team
- Humboldt County Drug Task Force
- Humboldt County JAG Steering Committee
- Connie Stewart, Executive Director, California Center for Rural Policy
- California Center for Rural Policy Staff: Barbara Browning, Alannah Smith
- Lisa A. Rossbacher, Ph.D., President, Humboldt State University
- Humboldt State University Sponsored Programs Foundation



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The California Center for Rural Policy at Humboldt State University is a research and policy center committed to informing policy, building community, and promoting the health and well-being of people and environments.

Suggested Citation:

Arledge, D. JAG Final Local Evaluation Report. Summary Findings. California Center for Rural Policy, Humboldt State University. March 2018.

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	1
Key Findings	1
Recommendations	2
Overview of Report Contents	2
Project Goals & Objectives.....	2
Effectiveness of Grant Activities	3
Evaluation Design.....	3
Final Program Outcomes	3
Conclusion	3
Project Goals & Objectives	3
Project Goals.....	3
Project Objectives	3
Effectiveness of Grant Activities	4
Collaborative Efforts.....	4
Opportunities to Conduct and Attend Trainings.....	5
Partnership with the North Coast Rape Crisis Team	5
Evaluation Design	6
Final Program Outcomes	8
Outcome Evaluation.....	9
Process Evaluation	10
Conclusion	12
Recommendations.....	13

Executive Summary

In 2015, the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office received funding through the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program. This report summarizes the evaluation findings for the three-year project. The purpose of the report is to determine whether the overall program (including each project component) was effective.

The project had three goals:

- To create and maintain a collaboration of law enforcement and natural resource agencies to identify, suppress, and investigate large-scale commercial marijuana operations
- An overall reduction in the number of large-scale marijuana operations that create environmental issues.
- To document the amount of resources needed to continue to successfully manage law enforcement operations aimed at these types of issues.

The project had two primary objectives:

- To reduce the number of marijuana operations by 10% by the end of the project period (150 grows per year for a total of 450 grows eliminated, based on an estimate of at least 4500 grows).
- To reduce the number of marijuana operations with documented environmental degradation. We expect that at least 50% of suppressed grows (75 per year or 225 total) will have documented environmental degradation.

The purpose of the report is to determine whether the overall program (including each project component) was effective.

Key Findings

The success of the program was accomplished through the overall reduction of large marijuana grow sites in Humboldt County.

A total of 172 marijuana operations were investigated and dismantled between 3/1/2015 and 12/31/2017. A total of 316,789 marijuana plants were eradicated during this period. An estimated 67 or 39% of those operations had environmental concerns such as:

- Presence of unpermitted greenhouses or outbuildings
- Presence of unpermitted logging, illegal grading or excavating
- Presence of illegal dumping
- Presence of pesticides and toxic poisons

The project had three goals, all of which were achieved. The project had three primary objectives. While the total number of grows eradicated did not reach 450, significant progress was made through the eradication of 172 marijuana operations totaling 316,789 marijuana plants. The second project objective was to reduce the number of marijuana operations with documented environmental degradation. We expected that at least 50% of suppressed grows would have

documented environmental degradation. At the end of the grant period, data showed that 67 or 39% of eradicated operations had documented environmental degradation. The third project objective was that a minimum of 50% of all suppressed grows (75 per year or 225 total) will have documented multi-agency coordination. At the end of the grant period, data showed that the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office worked with multiple agencies on the vast majority of marijuana operations that were eradicated during the grant period.

Other significant grant accomplishments include:

- 327 search warrants obtained, 307 search warrants served
- 217 arrests
- 67 weapons seized
- \$108,557,013 worth of illegal drugs seized; marijuana was the primary drug seized
- \$4,080,186 worth of assets seized
- 163 people received direct services who have been impacted by illicit drug abuse, manufacture or distribution and links to human trafficking within the marijuana industry
- Training curriculum and community outreach materials were developed and delivered on exploitation, sexual assault, and trafficking with the marijuana industry
- Agents from the Humboldt County Drug Task Force delivered 22 trainings during the grant period. Agents delivered drug awareness trainings at local high schools, non-profit organizations that serve youth, and with local tribes

Recommendations

These recommendations focus on key successes of the grant that should be sustained.

- Continue to maintain and enhance the multi-agency efforts of the Humboldt County Drug Task Force.
- Continue to maintain and enhance the efforts of collaborative partners to investigate and address environmental violations at grow sites.
- Continue to document multi-agency efforts to identify, investigate and eradicate large-scale commercial marijuana operations in Humboldt County.

Overview of Report Contents

In 2015, the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office received funding through the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program. This report summarizes the evaluation findings for the three-year project. The purpose of the report is to determine whether the overall program (including each project component) was effective. Specifically, the report includes:

Project Goals & Objectives

This section restates the project goals and objectives.

Effectiveness of Grant Activities

This section includes the assessment and documentation of the effectiveness of the activities that were implemented within each individual project component and identified in the local evaluation plan.

Evaluation Design

This section describes the evaluation design as laid out in the local evaluation plan, including process and outcome variables.

Final Program Outcomes

This section provides an in-depth discussion of the final outcomes of the program (for each individual project component) and includes a determination of the degree of effectiveness or ineffectiveness.

Conclusion

This section provides a conclusion regarding the overall effectiveness of the program.

Project Goals & Objectives

Project Goals

The project had three goals:

- To create and maintain a collaboration of law enforcement and natural resource agencies to identify, suppress, and investigate large-scale commercial marijuana operations
- An overall reduction in the number of large-scale marijuana operations that create environmental issues.
- To document the amount of resources needed to continue to successfully manage law enforcement operations aimed at these types of issues.

Project Objectives

The project had three primary objectives:

- To target a reduction in the number of marijuana operations by 10% by the end of the project period (150 grows per year for a total of 450 grows eliminated, based on an estimate of at least 4500 grows).
- To reduce the number of marijuana operations with documented environmental degradation. We expect that at least 50% of suppressed grows (75 per year or 225 total) will have documented environmental degradation.
- A minimum of 50% of all suppressed grows (75 per year or 225 total) will have documented multi-agency coordination.

JAG grant funding assisted the Humboldt County Sheriff's Office by allowing additional law enforcement resources to work on large scale marijuana investigations. Those agencies participated with the County Drug Task Force and assigned Humboldt County Sheriff's Deputies and were able to further assign staff to lead investigations, provide needed follow-up and/or

request local, state and federal agencies with these types of environmentally damaging operations.

The program gave priority to large, commercial cultivations with obvious devastation to the environment, trespassers, repeat offenders, and those involved in violence. Along with suppression efforts there were intensive investigations.

The success of this program will be the overall reduction of large marijuana grow sites.

Effectiveness of Grant Activities

The purpose for the three years of JAG funding was to continue the collaboration with all local, state and federal agencies that have responsibilities to the permitting, approval and regulatory processes related to large scale commercial marijuana operations. In collaboration they identified those violating local, state and federal laws in regards to commercial size illegal marijuana cultivations. The goals were to gather information on the many large for-profit marijuana grow sites. Many of these grow sites had significant environmental damage caused by the commercial marijuana growers. The Humboldt County Sheriff's Office worked closely and jointly with allied agencies to evaluate these criminal cases for successful prosecution of not only state and federal marijuana statutes, but for environmental laws, including but not limited to unpermitted water diversion, air quality and use of dangerous poisons.

Collaborative Efforts

The Humboldt County Sheriff's Office worked closely with the following partners and agencies:

- Bureau of Land Management
- United States Forest Service
- U.S. National and State Parks
- Homeland Security
- California Fish and Wildlife
- Cal-Fire
- United States Coast Guard
- California National Guard
- Federal Drug Enforcement Agency
- U.S. Marshall
- Federal Bureau of Investigation
- Hoopa and Yurok Tribal Enforcement
- Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms
- California Water and Air Quality
- Local large property (timber/ranch) security employees
- Local biologists

The Humboldt County Sheriff's also maintained a county wide Drug Task Force unit with a signed memorandum of understanding from each of the participating agencies from within the county. The Task Force is governed by an Executive Board made up of participating agency

Chiefs and Captains from the City Police Departments of Eureka, Fortuna, and Arcata, the California Highway Patrol, County District Attorney’s Office and the Sheriff of Humboldt County.

The Humboldt County Drug Task Force met monthly during the grant period with a few exceptions. Meeting minutes and monthly reports were provided to CCRP for use in the grant evaluation.

Additionally, the Humboldt County Sheriff’s Office convened the JAG Steering Committee, comprised of the following members:

- Humboldt County Sheriff
- Humboldt County District Attorney
- Humboldt County Chief Probation Officer
- Arcata Chief of Police
- Humboldt County Department of Health & Human Services

The JAG Steering Committee was able to successfully navigate a number of issues that arose during the grant period. The most significant of these was that the Public Defender’s Office was not able to meet the original request of the grant to fund a part-time forensic social worker. The Humboldt County Probation Department was able to identify the North Coast Rape Crisis Team to fill this gap. This decision was unanimously supported by the JAG Steering Committee, and the North Coast Rape Crisis Team was invited to join the JAG Steering Committee as a result.

Opportunities to Conduct and Attend Trainings

Humboldt County Drug Task Force agents delivered and received at least 1149 hours of training between 3/1/2015 and 12/31/2017. Agents attended 61 trainings and delivered 22 trainings during this time period. Agents delivered drug awareness trainings at local high schools, non-profit organizations that serve youth, and local tribes. Agents also conducted enforcement trainings for local police departments, the California Highway Patrol and students at College of the Redwoods. Humboldt County Drug Task Force members attended the annual California Narcotic Officers Association Conference in 2015 and 2016.

Partnership with the North Coast Rape Crisis Team

JAG funding made possible a partnership with the North Coast Rape Crisis team to fulfill the forensic social work that was originally slated for the Public Defender’s Office. The North Coast Rape Crisis team (NCRCT) provided services to 163 people during the grant period.

Summary of Services Provided by North Coast Rape Crisis Team	
Type of Service Provided	Number Served
Information & Referrals	151
Non-Criminal Justice Advocacy	13
Criminal Justice Advocacy	53
In-Person Crisis Intervention	57
Phone Crisis Intervention	91

Summary of Services Provided by North Coast Rape Crisis Team	
Type of Service Provided	Number Served
Individual Counseling	22
Accompaniment	36
Follow-Up	54
SART exam	18
Transportation	4

In addition to providing direct services to individuals, NCRCT also provide grant-related education and outreach. NCRCT staff provided trainings and conducted outreach to support individuals who subject to exploitation and trafficking within the marijuana industry. Some of the specific education and outreach activities included:

- Curriculum was developed and/or expanded on exploitation, sexual assault, and trafficking with the marijuana industry
- Training provided for domestic violence advocates and social workers which included issues of exploitation and trafficking within the marijuana industry
- Outreach materials were developed and distributed covering topics such as exploitation, sexual assault, and trafficking with the marijuana industry
- Response & reporting protocol development with event organizers related to sexual exploitation at events which tend to draw growers and users of marijuana as well as other illicit drugs including Benbow Arts & Music Festival and Reggae on the River
- NCRCT sexual assault counselors were on site at community event and had outreach materials available on exploitation, sexual assault, and trafficking with the marijuana industry
- Connections made with State Park Ranger staff with plans established to provide response protocol trainings
- Trainings were provided for university counseling & psychological service staff, students working to become alcohol and drug counselors, and CalWorks staff on exploitation, sexual assault, and trafficking within the marijuana industry.
- CSEC (sexually exploited children & adults collaboration) meetings – follow-up discussion of inclusion in developing protocols of connections and partnerships related to youth caught up in the marijuana industry who may be trafficking victims.
- Prevention education provided to incarcerated youth covering issues of sexual exploitation within marijuana industry

Evaluation Design

The evaluation component of the JAG grant was contracted to the California Center for Rural Policy (CCRP) at Humboldt State University in Arcata, CA. CCRP conducts research to inform policy, build community, and promote the health and well-being of rural people and environments. CCRP has extensive expertise conducting program evaluation for both university and community-based projects.

CCRP utilized a descriptive research design to measure the project’s effectiveness. The local evaluation plan further described how data will be collected, what evaluation tools will be used,

and the plan for analyzing and sharing the results. A descriptive research design allowed CCRP to describe what grows are being eliminated, what types of environmental damages are being caused, and the roles of other agencies involved in suppressing the marijuana grows and minimizing the environmental impact of such operations.

CCRP utilized an assessment evaluation including process (formative) variables and outcome (impact) variables. Variables were adjusted after review of data collected during the first six months of the grant. The following process and outcome variables were identified in the local evaluation plan.

Summary of JAG Outcome Evaluation Variables		
Variable Description	Variable Type	Agency to Collect Data
Location	Name of Community	HCDTF
Environmental concerns?	Number	HCSO
Description of environmental investigations	Narrative	HCSO
Warrants	Search Warrant Obtained	HCDTF
	Search Warrant Served	HCDTF
Number of Grow Operations Suppressed	Indoor/Outdoor/Total	HCSO
Number of Trespass Grows	Number	HCSO
Number of Plants Eradicated	Number	HCSO
Number of Arrests	Number	HCDTF
Assets Seizure	List of assets seized	HCDTF
	Total value	HCDTF
Weapons Seized	Number/Type/Value	HCDTF
Number of Cases Opened	Number	HCDTF
Number of Cases Closed	Number	HCDTF
Controlled Substances Seized	Type/Street Value	HCDTF
Primary Drug Seized	Type	HCDTF
Stolen Property Seized	Type/Value	HCDTF
Total number of grows suppressed per month	Number	HCSO MDSS; CCRP will calculate based on reported data

Summary of JAG Outcome Evaluation Variables		
Variable Description	Variable Type	Agency to Collect Data
Number of people receiving direct services who have been impacted by sexual assault, exploitation, and/or trafficking within the marijuana industry	Number	NCRCT

HCDTF: Humboldt County Drug Task Force

HCSO: Humboldt County Sheriff's Office

NCRCT: North Coast Rape Crisis Team

Summary of JAG Process Evaluation Variables		
Variable Description	Variable Type	How We Will Collect It
Agency attendance at county-wide Drug Task Force Unit meetings	Numeric & List	Review of meeting sign-in sheets; Sheriff's Office staff will complete quarterly checklist
Agency attendance at JAG Steering Committee meetings	Numeric & List	Review of meeting sign-in sheets; Sheriff's Office staff will complete quarterly checklist
Meeting outcomes	Narrative	Sheriff's Office to provide agenda packets, meeting minutes; CCRP to review and summarize outcomes
Type and value of collaboration and networking	Narrative	CCRP will interview key staff

Final Program Outcomes

The success of this program will be the overall reduction of large marijuana grow sites. The final results from the program evaluation are discussed in this section. Overall, the JAG program was successful in meeting grant goals and objectives. This determination is based on review of the process and outcome data, collaborative meetings and reports, and interviews with key project staff.

Outcome Evaluation

JAG Outcome Variables- Results (3/1/2015-12/31/2015)			
Variable Description	Variable Type	Results	
Location	Name of Community	Fortuna	42
		Arcata	11
		Eureka	52
		Garberville	8
		McKinleyville	11
		Trinidad	14
		Blue Lake	8
		Other	11
Environmental concerns?	Number	67	
Warrants	Search Warrant Obtained	327	
	Search Warrant Served	307	
Number of Grow Operations Suppressed	Indoor/Outdoor/Total	172	
Number of Trespass Grows	Number	29	
Number of Plants Eradicated	Number	316,789	
Number of Arrests	Number	217	
Assets Seizure	List of assets seized	Currency	
	Total value	\$4,080,186.23	
Weapons Seized	Number/Type/Value	67	
Number of Cases Opened	Number	139	
Number of Cases Closed	Number	261	
Controlled Substances Seized	Type/Street Value	\$108,557,013.00	
Primary Drug Seized	Type	Marijuana	
Stolen Property Seized	Type/Value	8/\$18,408.00	
Total number of grows suppressed per month	Number	Approximately 5	
Number of people receiving direct services who have been impacted by sexual assault, exploitation, and/or trafficking within the marijuana industry	Number	163	

Summary of Environmental Investigations

A conservative estimate of the number of grows with environmental concerns is 67 out of 172 or 39% of operations that were investigated and dismantled between 3/1/2015 and 12/31/2017.

Presence and/or size of unpermitted greenhouses

This information was collected by DEU during criminal investigations and documented by report. County Code Enforcement also investigated Unpermitted Buildings violations associated with greenhouses.

Presence of unpermitted logging, illegal grading or excavating

CAL Fire LEO investigated unpermitted logging. Unpermitted Grading violations were investigated by County Code Enforcement. Grading is associated with water pollution violations that were investigated by CDFW and State Water Board.

Presence of illegal water diversion or stream bed alterations

This was investigated by CDFW and State Water Board.

Presence of illegal dumping and/or pounds of trash at sites

Code Enforcement would investigate county code violations regarding illegal dumping. CDFW and State Water Board would investigate water pollution regarding trash in or near a water way. CAL Fire would investigate illegal burning of trash.

Presence of and types of pesticides/toxic poisons

Several forms of Rodenticides were located on various marijuana cultivation sites, including banned Rodenticides such as Carbofuron. Environmental Health HAZMAT investigated several incidents of hazardous waste such as diesel and oil.

Follow-up environmental investigations and/or actions

All environmental investigative follow-up and actions were done by CDFW, State Water Board, CAL Fire, State Water Board and Code Enforcement. Action was taken either civilly through agency channels or through the District Attorney's Office.

Process Evaluation

Value of Participation in a Multi-Agency Drug Task Force

In terms of the value of participation in a multi-agency drug task force, members cited the following:

- Increased collaboration
- Increased cross-training opportunities with law enforcement, county alcohol and drug services, and county mental health.

- Increased access to serve survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse who have been impacted by illicit drug abuse, manufacture or distribution and links to human trafficking

According to members of the Humboldt County Drug Task Force:

“This style of collaborative effort allows a task force to staff personnel without any one agency taking on the burden. Having a multi-agency task force will bring several different investigative disciplines and styles together in a positive manner. Each agency has a superior understanding of their jurisdictional area and who the traffickers are within that area.”

“This collaborative effort began during the last five to six years and has begun to increase in effectiveness each year. This inter-agency cooperation will become a major difference in combating illegal marijuana cultivations as this collaborative effort continues to become more cohesive.”

Type of Collaboration and Networking

HCSO Drug Enforcement Unit (DEU) worked in collaboration with many federal, state, and local agencies when serving marijuana search warrants. This includes agencies such as: Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), United States Forest Service (USFS), Campaign Against Marijuana Planting (CAMP), California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), California Army National Guard Counter Drug Unit, CAL Fire Law Enforcement, State Water Board, Humboldt County Environmental Health HAZMAT, and Humboldt County Code Enforcement.

Each agency either conducts a parallel investigation relating to environmental violations associated with marijuana cultivation under a DEU search warrant or directly assists DEU with the service of marijuana search warrants.

The HCSO DEU is the primary investigative unit within the County of Humboldt that investigates illegal marijuana cultivation. DEU works in close collaboration with CDFW Watershed Enforcement Team (WET). CDFW focuses on illegal marijuana investigations that affect wetlands, watersheds, and waterways. The state and local agencies listed above are a form of Environmental Crime Task Force that focus investigations on environmental crimes associated with illegal marijuana cultivation. The goal is to file both criminal and civil penalties against subjects directly associated with illegal marijuana cultivation and the landowners that are allowing environmental violations associated with illegal marijuana cultivation to occur on their property.

Bringing in agencies with different investigative disciplines that investigate a separate set of violations increases the number of punitive actions that can be taken regarding illegal marijuana cultivation, so that both criminal and civil penalties can be applied against the cultivator and the property owner.

Conclusion

A total of 172 marijuana operations were investigated and dismantled between 3/1/2015 and 12/31/2017. A total of 316,789 marijuana plants were eradicated during this period. An estimated 67 or 39% of those operations had environmental concerns such as:

- Presence of unpermitted greenhouses or outbuildings
- Presence of unpermitted logging, illegal grading or excavating
- Presence of illegal dumping
- Presence of pesticides and toxic poisons

The project had three goals, all of which were achieved.

- To create and maintain a collaboration of law enforcement and natural resource agencies to identify, suppress, and investigate large-scale commercial marijuana operations
- An overall reduction in the number of large-scale marijuana operations that create environmental issues.
- To document the amount of resources needed to continue to successfully manage law enforcement operations aimed at these types of issues.

The project had three primary objectives. While the total number of grows eradicated did not reach 450, significant progress was made through the eradication of 172 marijuana operations totaling 316,789 marijuana plants.

- To target a reduction in the number of marijuana operations by 10% by the end of the project period (150 grows per year for a total of 450 grows eliminated, based on an estimate of at least 4500 grows).

Result: 172 marijuana operations were eradicated.

- To reduce the number of marijuana operations with documented environmental degradation. We expect that at least 50% of suppressed grows (75 per year or 225 total) will have documented environmental degradation.

Result: 67 or 39% of eradicated operations had documented environmental degradation.

- A minimum of 50% of all suppressed grows (75 per year or 225 total) will have documented multi-agency coordination.

Result: The Humboldt County Sheriff's Office worked with multiple agencies on the vast majority of marijuana operations that were eradicated during the grant period.

Other significant grant accomplishments include:

- 327 search warrants obtained, 307 search warrants served
- 217 arrests
- 67 weapons seized

- \$108,557,013 worth of illegal drugs seized; marijuana was the primary drug seized
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Recommendations

These recommendations focus on key successes of the grant that should be sustained.

- Continue to maintain and enhance the multi-agency efforts of the Humboldt County Drug Task Force.
- Continue to maintain and enhance the efforts of collaborative partners to investigate and address environmental violations at grow sites.
- Continue to document multi-agency efforts to identify, investigate and eradicate large-scale commercial marijuana operations in Humboldt County.