

BIENNIAL STRATEGY REVIEW SYSTEM

Chesapeake Bay Program



Narrative Analysis

LOCAL LEADERSHIP – FEBRUARY 11, 2021

The narrative analysis summarizes the findings of the logic and action plan and serves as the bridge between the logic and action plan and the quarterly progress meeting presentation. Based on what you learned over the past two years from your successes and challenges, you will describe whether the partnership should make adaptations or change course.

Use your completed pre-quarterly logic and action plan to answer the questions below. After the quarterly progress meeting, your responses to these questions will guide your updates to your logic and action plan. Additional guidance can be found on [ChesapeakeDecisions](#).

1. *Examine your red/yellow/green analysis of your management actions. What lessons have you learned over the past two years of implementation?*

In the 2019 – 2020 Local Leadership (LL) Logic and Action Plan (L&AP), all of the actions listed under Management Approach 1 and 2 are green; that is, they have been completed or are moving forward as planned. *Management Approach 0: Establish baseline and measure progress* has encountered minor obstacles and therefore is marked as yellow.

WHAT WORKED:

- Strong relationships with partners both inside and outside of the Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) continue to be essential to Outcome success. Local government associations, who are trusted sources of information, have been particularly valuable partners. The Local Leadership Workgroup's (LLWG) most successful projects have been in close partnership with these trusted sources. Additionally, close collaboration with CBP staff is vital to ensure strategic messaging that aligns with CBP priorities and local engagement needs. The LLWG has had success engaging these internal partners to better understand CBP priority audiences, messages and actions. This information has been invaluable when planning and implementing local official watershed education efforts.
- Peer-to-peer knowledge sharing continues to be a highly effective methodology. The October 2019 peer-to-peer learning exchange bus tour, title *Wandering Virginia's Waterways*, received rave reviews from the local elected official attendees and has led to a deeper collaboration with Virginia's local government associations and Commonwealth officials. Additionally, conference panels that were comprised of primarily local officials sharing their successes and lessons learned were the most well attended and received the best reviews (Ex. Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors 2019 Annual Conference session on '*Understanding Your Communities' Stormwater Obligation*').
- A jurisdictional approach is necessary to tailor content to meet distinct regional needs. By working jurisdiction by jurisdiction, the LLWG has been able to address specific needs that local communities have identified. For example, Maryland coastal communities are concerned about

increased flooding as a result of climate change. Through a collaboration with the Municipal Online Stormwater Training (MOST) Center, the LLWG convened these communities for virtual training and peer to peer discussion on how to address these challenges.

- Committed LLWG members worked diligently throughout the last two years, including significant attendance at quarterly workgroup meetings, robust discussion during meetings and a high level of engagement between quarterly meetings, that often included smaller group emails and discussions to plan and implement targeted engagement efforts.

WHAT DIDN'T WORK:

- Poorly coordinated one-off efforts that lacked a comprehensive, strategic lens. In particular, conference panel sessions that were not tied to a large initiative were unlikely to be successful in the proposal process.

OBSTACLES:

- Baseline survey approval by the Office of Management and Budget has been more difficult than anticipated. By developing the baseline survey methodology, progress has been made toward filling this information gap, but the federal approval process has delayed further action.
- The COVID-19 global pandemic has forced many partners, including local government associations, to cancel, postpone, or rethink planned in-person events. In the short-term, this pivot to virtual platforms has limited the workgroup's ability to transfer knowledge to local officials via trusted sources. Future efforts will plan for this new virtual world and will be minimally impacted.

FACTORS:

The current factors impacting our ability to achieve our outcome still stand, including: 1) competing interests for resources and the attention of local officials, 2) limited scientific and technical expertise among local officials, 3) routine turnover of local officials and 4) distinct regional needs. One new factor has been identified: the impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic on local government's finances, priorities and operations.

GAPS:

During implementation of the 2019 – 2020 LL L&AP, some of the previously identified gaps have been filled or partially filled, including, but not limited to:

- An assessment of current training and other opportunities to enhance the connection of CBP priorities to local priorities was completed. This information fills an important gap in our understanding of the opportunities to collaborate with existing training programs.
- Newly created watershed educational materials that are tailored to local government priorities partially addresses the previously identified need for reliable, comprehensive information that resonates with local priorities.

Many of the gaps previously identified remain. Further efforts are needed to fully address the following gaps: 1) too few opportunities exist for local officials to share information and learn from each other 2) no baseline understanding of local official's knowledge and capacity and 3) lack of funding and/or financing at the local level.

2. Regardless of how successful your short-term progress has been over the past two years, indicate whether we are making progress at a rate that is necessary to achieve the outcome you are working toward. The example graph below illustrates this concept.

A baseline level of knowledge and capacity has not yet been established for the LL Outcome. Therefore, we do not have the quantitative data required to determine whether or not we are making progress at a rate that is necessary to achieve the LL Outcome.

We do have some qualitative information, particularly as it relates to the outputs of the workgroup's efforts in the last two years. Here is a brief summary:

- The LLWG has 32 active and engaged members that represent 30+ associations, agencies and organizations. This list includes 15+ local government associations and trusted sources representing the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed.
- Over the last two years, the workgroup has partnered with local government associations to organize 12 workshops/panel sessions on Bay-related topics that have reached an estimated 500 local officials from throughout the watershed.
- Through sharing of virtual resources, such as local government association newsletters, educational content and resources related to the Bay outcomes have reached an estimated 5,000 local officials and staff.
- A pilot scale peer-to-peer learning exchange bus tour successfully engaged 27 local elected officials in experiential knowledge building and sharing. An attendee of the tour said, *"It was a memorable and inspiring two days... Most of us in the watershed area understand the importance of our actions and their effect on the bay and tidal areas. As elected officials though, we get wrapped up with regulations raining down on us from the state and federal governments. This tour puts a face on why it's important. What impressed me most were the presentations and the tours. They were informative, factual, and unrehearsed. No emotional pleas or crab hugging...I've been passing my experience on to anyone who will listen."* Overall, attendees rated the experience 4.8/5 on a post event survey, with 80% of attendees selecting the 5/5 option, which indicated that the it was 'a valuable learning experience'.

3. What scientific, fiscal and policy-related developments will influence your work over the next two years?

FISCAL: The COVID-19 global pandemic has had a profound impact on local governments finances. For many counties, revenue is down and expenses are up, leading to an estimated \$202 billion shortfall nationwide¹. The full fiscal impacts of the pandemic are still unknown, but in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed a majority of local governments surveyed anticipate that environmental programs will be impacted by budget cuts².

POLICY: The pandemic has forced local governments to focus on essential services, like public health. Additionally, the economic impacts of the pandemic have intensified the need for economic

¹ <https://www.naco.org/sites/default/files/documents/Analysis-of-COVID-19s-Impact-on-County-Finances-and-Implications-for-the-US-Economy.pdf>

² https://www.bayjournal.com/news/local_government/covid-19-disrupts-local-level-efforts-to-clean-up-chesapeake-bay/article_od9a2f2a-f202-11ea-9ad4-033bd56aadc3.html

revitalization and workforce development. Many local officials have had to shift their focus away from watershed restoration and back to these urgent issues.

DEIJ: The Executive Council's '*Statement in support of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice*' reaffirms the Bay Program's commitment to advancing these principles. It comes at the same time as many local governments are grappling with racial injustice in their communities.

VIRTUAL WORK: The COVID-19 global pandemic has led to widespread adoption of virtual work, including virtual meetings and conferences. The full impact of this shift is unknown, but the workgroup anticipates that there will be more opportunities for virtual learning and collaborative than ever before and fewer in person conferences and meetings.

CLIMATE CHANGE: Local leaders are increasingly acknowledging and addressing the impacts of climate change in their communities, specifically as it relates to flooding. Even so, there is an urgent need for increased climate literacy, expanded technical assistance for local governments and broadened resilience planning throughout the watershed.

4. *Based on your response to the questions above, how will your work change over the next two years?*

In order to achieve the LL outcome, it is critical that the LLWG implements a comprehensive engagement strategy that includes consistent messages coming from different sources and in different ways. Given the lessons learned in the last two years and new factors impacting our ability to achieve the LL outcome, we anticipate the following changes in the next two years:

- Virtual learning will be an essential component of the LLWG approach until mid-2021 or later, depending on the status of the COVID-19 global pandemic. Potential opportunities include, but are not limited to: virtual panels, sharing of electronic resources, virtual peer to peer discussions and more.
- Expand from knowledge transfer to building capacity. In 2019 – 2020, significant progress was made on processes and relationships to increase local official's knowledge on issues related to water resources. While considerable work is still required on knowledge transfer, the LLWG needs to expand its focus to include increasing the capacity of local officials, including identifying and expanding efficient ways of providing local governments with crucial technical assistance.
- Engage with senior staff at the local level, including planners; these are the 'teachers' that reinforce and support local elected official learning from other settings (i.e. trusted source events and resources). Senior staff, who may have more institutional knowledge than elected officials and are more likely to have a technical background, are well positioned to increase the capacity of local officials.
- New elected official training exists throughout the watershed, but the LLWG has yet to plug into these programs. The newly created watershed educational materials are ripe for adding to existing training programs and a valuable opportunity to get officials up to speed quickly.
- Adaptively managing our approaches based on the results of the baseline survey.

Additionally, the LLWG anticipates continuing to serve as a broker between trusted sources, the CBP and local leaders. We plan to enhance the quality and expanding the scope of ongoing actions that have already proven successful:

- A regional approach that focuses on jurisdiction and/or regionally specific needs and tailors' educational content and delivery method to targeted audiences. For example, the newly completed watershed education materials for local officials (which are designed for a general, watershed-wide audience) are going to be adapted by Pennsylvania into a watershed handbook for local governments. Similar efforts are in discussion in several other jurisdictions and/or regional partners.
- Peer to peer knowledge transfer opportunities, like the learning exchange bus tour should be expanded throughout the watershed. Unfortunately, expanded work in this area will have to be held until in person events are safe again.
- The new educational materials fill a previously identified need for easily accessible and comprehensible information out that resonates with local priorities. Dissemination of these materials will need to be a key focus of the 2021 – 2022 LL L&AP.
- Relationships with workgroup members will continue to be a top priority. The LLWG will continue to build our network by expanding our membership, creating opportunities for deeper participation and strengthening ties with jurisdictional representatives.

5. *What, if any, actions can the Management Board take to help ensure success in achieving your outcome?*

Local officials continue to be critical to the success of the CBP. Without implementation of local conservation actions by counties and municipalities, we will fall far short of meeting the outcomes of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement. To be successful, we need high level buy-in, support and credibility for the LLWG's efforts. With this goal in mind, the LLWG asks that you take the following actions:

- Accept an invitation from LLWG to attend a meeting with YOUR jurisdictional/regional trusted sources
- At this meeting, identify key strategies/actions for implementation in 2021 – 2023
 - o Ex. Identify conferences/possible engagements where having a state presence is beneficial
 - o Ex. Send letters to trusted sources recommending LLWG for future conferences