

2022 Local Government Forum: Integrating Resilience into Local Planning

Problem Statement

Local governments face increasing pressure to ensure the safety and health of residents, businesses, infrastructure, and the natural environment in the midst of a changing climate. The development, integration into existing plans, funding, and implementation of actionable resilience plans are key to the success of building this local resilience. However, there are persistent barriers to achieving this success, including staff capacity limitations, lack of funding clarity, and unclear paths to resilience plan implementation. Addressing these targeted, persistent barriers can catalyze the success of these local resilience efforts.

Obstacles and Barriers

Building Buy-In

- Lack of political and community interest and support
- Limited staff capacity to oversee and develop plan
- Lack of funding and staff capacity to seek and obtain funding

Planning Process

- Limited staff capacity to oversee and develop plan
- Limited subject matter expertise and technical assistance
- Break down silos and build partnerships
- Empower the community in the planning and decision-making process. Address inequities

Implementation

- Large-scale, high-cost solutions are more likely to have more beneficial results
- Limited funding and inability to access funding resources
- Lack of subject matter expertise to design projects

Assumptions

- Budget constraints challenge local governments to implement resilience-based actions given competing needs now and in the foreseeable future.
- There are challenges with local capacity and adequate resources to address problems related to resilience.
- State policies, funding, available technical assistance, and agency expertise vary across the watershed. Available resources may be unknown or complex, creating additional barriers for local governments to access the resources.
- Collaborative local government planning will result in a more effective, actionable, robust, and comprehensive effort.
- Promoting effective communication, collaboration, and cooperation for resilience planning and financing across the watershed will aid in these efforts.

Assumptions

- Successful local resilience plans consider local conditions, needs, and capacity. However, they share some attributes that are scalable from small, rural communities to larger, metropolitan ones.
- Successful resilience plans include an implementation component that incorporates both short-, medium-, and long-term actions and investments.
- Federal infrastructure funding offers a unique opportunity to invest in resilience, especially if future conditions are included in the design of projects.
- Currently required plans including floodplain management plans, regional transportation long-range plans, and community economic development strategies, need to be integrated into resilience and hazard mitigation planning efforts to ensure a comprehensive approach to community development and resilience.

Innovative Case Studies

Hampton Roads, VA: Coastal Resiliency Program

Key Takeaways:

- Focus on a regional approach to flood resilience vs. community by community.
- Resilient design guidelines should be scientifically based, appropriate, and implementable.
- Data may be incomplete or unavailable.
- State and federal agencies can provide guidance, but their ability to deliver may depend on government priorities and annual budgets.
- It's not enough to have a "resilience plan". Implementing resilience requires incorporating it into established processes - comprehensive plans, Community Improvement Plans, budgets, public facilities manuals, etc.

Innovative Case Studies

Cumberland County, PA: Climate Action Plan

Key Takeaways:

- Focus on implementation from Day 1, this will be important to measure the impacts of actions.
- Seek help from a variety of sources—leveraging capacity outside the county seemed to be helpful.
- Focus on what can be done, and who should take the prescribed actions – people need to see a role for themselves in the solution.
- Encourage collaboration with other communities with overlapping goals to avoid redundancy and share resources where possible.
- Incorporate climate/resiliency considerations into all elements for which you are currently responsible.

Innovative Case Studies

Baltimore City, MD: Disaster Preparedness and Planning Project (DP3)

Key Takeaways:

- DP3 and other planning efforts have created relationships across city departments and the community. This has brought mitigation planning into the spotlight during city council meetings and other planning efforts.
- The focus on building equitable relationships has made implementation easier. The city has developed relationships with organizations that can assist in strengthening communities before, during and after disaster events.
- The city has benefited from implementing the mitigation strategies in the DP3, through both cost savings and improved relationships.

Breakouts

Discussion Centered on Strategizing on the following Goals:

Goal #1: Building buy-in and momentum for integrating resilience into the local planning process

Goal #2: Carrying out the planning process

Goal #3: Implementing the plan

Key Recommendations

Communication and Outreach: *Develop clear, localized language to provide local governments with public education and outreach resources to build support and buy-in for resilience efforts.*

Guidance: *Provide local governments guidance on integrating resilience into existing processes, based on state and federal mandates and requirements such as hazard mitigation, stormwater, watershed, and comprehensive land use plans.*

Funding: *Expand funding opportunities to increase flexibility and eligibility criteria for funding sources while demystifying and streamlining funding application process.*

Key Recommendations

Partnership and Buy-in: *Host an annual resilience conference for local and state elected officials, local government staff, academia, and subject matter experts within the non-profit and private sectors to increase awareness regarding the need for resilience throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed, promote buy-in and support, and highlight funding opportunities.*

Capacity Building: *Identify a mechanism to build additional capacity in each state to provide technical assistance and support local governments with resilience planning and grant writing with consideration for additional dedicated full time staff.*