

Local Government Forum Report:

# Integrating Resilience into Local Planning

Thursday, September 29th, 2022

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**Local Government Advisory Committee  
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## Forum Overview and Objectives

### Background

Developing watershed level strategies to restore the health of the Chesapeake Bay, its tributaries, and surrounding lands requires a comprehensive approach that is led by the needs of those local governments working towards these goals daily. The Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) advises the Chesapeake Executive Council on how to engage local governments by sharing the views and insights of local elected officials and enhancing the flow of information among local governments.

For several years LGAC has focused on managing local flooding impacts, exploring collaborative regional partnerships, promoting workforce development opportunities related to green infrastructure, and assisting states within the Chesapeake Bay watershed to develop strategies for addressing gaps in local capacity. For the 2022 Local Government Forum (Forum), LGAC set its sights on identifying recommendations for supporting long-term adaptive capacity for local governments.

Building resilience throughout the watershed is becoming increasingly important as climate change impacts, such as frequent and intense storms, cause greater concerns for local governments. Understanding existing capacity challenges at the local level, LGAC determined the most feasible way to prioritize resilience is to identify pathways to integrate climate change into existing local planning efforts.

*Resilience can be defined as the ability of communities to rebound, positively adapt to, and thrive amidst changing climate and natural hazard conditions or challenges and to maintain quality of life, healthy growth, durable systems, economic vitality, and conservation of resources for present and future generations.*

A resilient community can have direct and indirect long-term benefits from properly implementing prioritized strategies into their local plans. Direct benefits result from improvements to infrastructure and assets to provide added protection to the people, places, and the natural environment in a community. During times of disasters and emergencies, recovery is likely to be quicker and more robust because of prior actions taken during the planning process that prioritize resilience. These proactive actions result in risk reduction which lessens impacts to the built and natural environment, economy, and social cohesion of the community. Indirect benefits include the co-benefits realized from resilience projects such as increasing the quality of life, improved recreation, and sustainability of communities.

The 2022 Forum resulted in the development of specific recommendations for the Chesapeake Bay Program's leadership (Chesapeake Executive Council, Principals' Staff Committee, and Management Board). These recommendations identify and address the highest priority local government needs for facilitating and accelerating the development and implementation of integrating resilience in planning efforts.

### Integrating Resilience into Local Planning Efforts

Communities undertake several planning efforts which provide opportunities to integrate resilience principles into existing community initiatives. Planning efforts such as hazard mitigation plans, stormwater management plans, parks and recreation plans, and many more are carried out periodically in communities. Some of these planning processes are mandated to meet laws and regulations.

Identifying opportunities to integrate planning processes provides many benefits to a community such as cost savings, economies of scale, partnership building, and development of mutually beneficial outcomes.

Equipping local elected officials and leaders with the resources to make risk-informed decisions is imperative to ensure a comprehensive approach to building resilience. Risk data may be obtained through a variety of resources such as reports, analyses, and interactions with subject matter experts, citizens, and more. Building resilience is not only achieved through obtaining knowledge and identifying risk but also through identifying methods to successfully implement projects and build partnerships for long-term risk reduction.

Resilience planning addresses climate change and often includes analyses of the natural and man-made drivers of climate change. These plans prioritize utilizing future projections and data to inform how risk is analyzed. Incorporating resiliency planning into the normal operational plans that already exist for requirements like stormwater and land use planning is vital for success. The focus is to reduce likely impacts and ensure key infrastructure systems, natural resources, public services, and populations are resilient, meaning able to adapt and respond to, and rebound or recover from hazard impacts. Resilience planning identifies a suite of actions that may be achieved in short-, medium-, or long-term.

### Pre-Forum Planning

Planning for the Forum incorporated the expertise of a diverse team representing local governments and states throughout the watershed. LGAC convened a Forum Planning Team (see **Appendix A: List of Forum Participants** for a detailed list of members) to serve as subject matter experts and guide the development of Forum materials and objectives. Forum Planning Team members were integral in refining the problem statement, informing the Forum Backgrounder, identifying assumptions and obstacles, prioritizing topics for breakout discussion, and contributing case studies and resources.

The Planning Team held three, one-hour virtual meetings to discuss materials and provide guidance on the structure and content of the Forum. A survey distributed to the Forum Planning Team provided an opportunity to capture detailed feedback intended to inform Forum planning efforts and prioritize local barriers. LGAC staff conducted further outreach and research through one-on-one meetings with Forum Planning Team members, additional subject matter experts, and the Forum Facilitator.

The Forum Backgrounder (see **Appendix B: Backgrounder**), detailing goals, the problem statement, obstacles, and assumptions, was distributed to Forum participants prior to the Forum. This served to help prepare participants with the expectations and scope of the Forum as well as establish a shared baseline of knowledge. The agenda (see **Appendix C: Agenda**) contained websites for participants to learn more about the case studies prior to the Forum.

### Obstacles and Barriers

The obstacles and barriers identified below are the result of pre-Forum discussions and surveys. These obstacles and barriers present challenges that local governments are likely to face when pursuing integration of resilience into local planning efforts. These challenges are categorized into the three key phases of any planning process. Developing recommendations to surmount these barriers are expected to serve as a catalyst to building resilience throughout the watershed.

Building Buy-In	Planning Process	Implementation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Lack of political and community interest and support</li> <li>•Limited staff capacity to oversee and develop plan</li> <li>•Lack of funding and staff capacity to seek and obtain funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Limited staff capacity to oversee and develop plan</li> <li>•Limited subject matter expertise and technical assistance</li> <li>•Break down silos and build partnerships</li> <li>•Empower the community in the planning and decision-making process. Address inequities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Large-scale, high-cost solutions are more likely to have more beneficial results</li> <li>•Limited funding and inability to access funding resources</li> <li>•Lack of subject matter expertise to design projects</li> </ul>

## Forum Proceedings

The Forum was conducted in a hybrid format with in-person participants convening at the National Conservation Training Center in West Virginia and remote participants using the Zoom virtual meeting platform. The Forum facilitators began by asking participants to share their personal definition of resilience. Participants contributed the following words to describe resilience: sustainability, community engagement, survivor, endurance, cyclical, justice, prepared, long-term, preparedness, perpetual, responsiveness, equitable, proactive, adaptation, climate, flexibility, survivability, and mutual aid.

Participants were welcomed and provided an overview of the responsibilities of LCAG and the purpose and goals of the Forum. The problem statement was reviewed, and participants provided additional feedback to refine the problem statement and ensure it was representative of local government concerns and needs. Following this participants discussed the applicability and relevance of the assumptions and barriers. Three case studies were shared to provide examples of how other local governments throughout the watershed have found success in integrating resilience into local planning efforts. Participants were then divided into breakout groups to continue discussions focused on identifying solutions and recommendations for supporting local governments to overcome the identified barriers. The complete agenda for the Local Government Forum is available in **Appendix C: Agenda**.

### Problem Statement

Forum participants reviewed the draft problem statement and provided input to refine it based on the wide range of identified local needs, existing programs, and resources. The problem statement is directed towards local government. Below is the agreed-upon 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.

## Assumptions

From the identified barriers, the Forum Planning Team developed a set of assumptions to guide and focus the day. The following were the guiding set of 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.
- 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

### Discovering What Others Have Done

The Forum Planning Team identified three case studies--Hampton Roads, Virginia; Cumberland County, PA; and Baltimore City, MD--to demonstrate how resilience has been successfully integrated in local planning efforts through the region. The case studies are representative of the diversity of the communities within the Chesapeake Bay watershed – case studies showcased coastal, rural/suburban,

and urban communities. The full case study presentations are available in **Appendix D: Case Studies Slides**.

### **Hampton Roads, VA: Coastal Resiliency Program**

The [Hampton Roads Planning District Commission](#)<sup>1</sup> supports a variety of planning efforts with resiliency integrated throughout for 17 local jurisdictions. The commission provides support and technical assistance focused on policy, coordination, outreach, and project development and implementation. The presentation provided cases of three planning efforts for Hampton, Norfolk, and Virginia Beach.

Hampton's [Resilient Hampton](#)<sup>2</sup> initiative serves as the foundation for all other planning and implementation efforts in Hampton Roads, VA. The plan prioritizes identifying community values and subsequently developing goals and strategies based on those values. The initiative takes a holistic approach to resilience by focusing on four key areas which include: policy, education and communication, physical projects, and operations and maintenance.

Norfolk took the approach of developing a long-range plan envisioned for 2100; [NorfolkVision2100](#)<sup>3</sup> integrates resilience into traditional land use and zoning ordinances by calling for higher regulatory standards and a points-based resilience quotient. Development projects are provided points for certain activities related to stormwater management, risk reduction, and energy resilience. There is a minimum requirement for points based on location, size, and type of development.

Virginia Beach's [Sea Level Wise Adaptation Strategy](#)<sup>4</sup> builds on a comprehensive assessment of the city's future climate, risk, and options for mitigation and adaptation. The strategy identifies engineering solutions based on modeling, a socioeconomic analysis, and strategy development. The City tailored a set of recommended strategies for each of its main watersheds to ensure the success of these measures. This effort is complimented by the City's design standards which has higher regulatory requirements to address current and future flooding.

#### 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.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.hrpdcva.gov/departments/water-resources/research-and-analysis->

<sup>2</sup> <https://hampton.gov/3459/Resiliency>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.norfolk.gov/DocumentCenter/View/27768/Vision-2100---FINAL?bidId=>

<sup>4</sup>

<https://www.vbgov.com/government/departments/public-works/comp-sea-level-rise/Pages/default.aspx#:~:text=Sea%20Level%20Wise%20is%20the,to%20these%20changing%20environmental%20conditions>

### ***Cumberland County, PA: Climate Action Plan***

The Cumberland County [Climate Action Plan](#)<sup>5</sup> focuses on implementation actions that residents, businesses, and local governments can take to address the inputs of greenhouse gases and to mitigate the impacts of warmer, wetter weather on the population, environment, cultural resources, and property. The plan incorporates a Vulnerability and Adaptation Assessment focused on populations in farming occupations, people facing economic disadvantages, residents in floodplains, and people with chronic health conditions.

The County was selected by Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection to participate in the Local Climate Action Program (LCAP) which matches local governments with experts in academia to develop greenhouse gas inventories and climate action plans. The plan was developed in partnership with a cross section of partners from academia, state government, and subject matter experts within key focus areas (municipal government, energy, transportation, waste management, and agriculture).

Cumberland County identified challenges regarding the County's role related to resilience efforts, public perception of resilience, and limited staffing and resources. To tackle these challenges the County first led by example, making operational improvements such as vehicle fleet electrification and utilizing alternative energy. To address the ambiguity of the County's role in resilience efforts, the CAP was developed with implementation strategies that span the various levels of government. Public engagement was conducted, and community members were surveyed to determine what the community perceived as barriers and what potential solutions they would be interested in.

#### **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.

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

The Baltimore City [Disaster Preparedness and Planning Project \(DP3\)](#)<sup>6</sup> was originally produced by the Baltimore Department of Planning in 2013 to detail the City's strategy to locally address both existing hazards and future hazards due to intensifying climate change impacts. The City conducted an intensive update process for the DP3 in 2018. The plan profiles hazards including: flooding, coastal hazards, precipitation variability, extreme wind, extreme heat, and air quality. Strategies to address these hazards were developed for infrastructure, buildings, natural systems, and public systems. The 2018 update was a collaborative process co-led by the Office of Sustainability and the Mayor's Office of Emergency Management; additional partners included city, state, and federal agencies, non-profit organizations, and

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cumberlandcountypa.gov/4898/Climate-Action-Plan>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.baltimoresustainability.org/plans/disaster-preparedness-plan/>



a private sector technical support group. The plan was funded through FEMA’s Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) and the Coastal Zone Management Act grant.

Baltimore faced several challenges leading to the development of the DP3. The City’s proximity to waterways increases its vulnerability to the effects of climate change and the urban environment and concentrated population means there is a larger number of people and structures exposed to these hazards. Previously the hazard mitigation plan was treated as a separate planning process from other efforts in the City, which necessitated an updated combined effort to strengthen relations across City functions. To further address these challenges the City convened an advisory committee to identify intersections of natural hazards and social needs for creating a sustainable City.

The DP3 utilized an Equity and Outreach subcommittee to define an equity lens and ensure the implementation of that lens through the plan update. The subcommittee encouraged robust engagement which included community surveying and participating in existing community meetings. This process ensured that equity priorities and actions were integral in the planning process to achieve equitable outcomes.

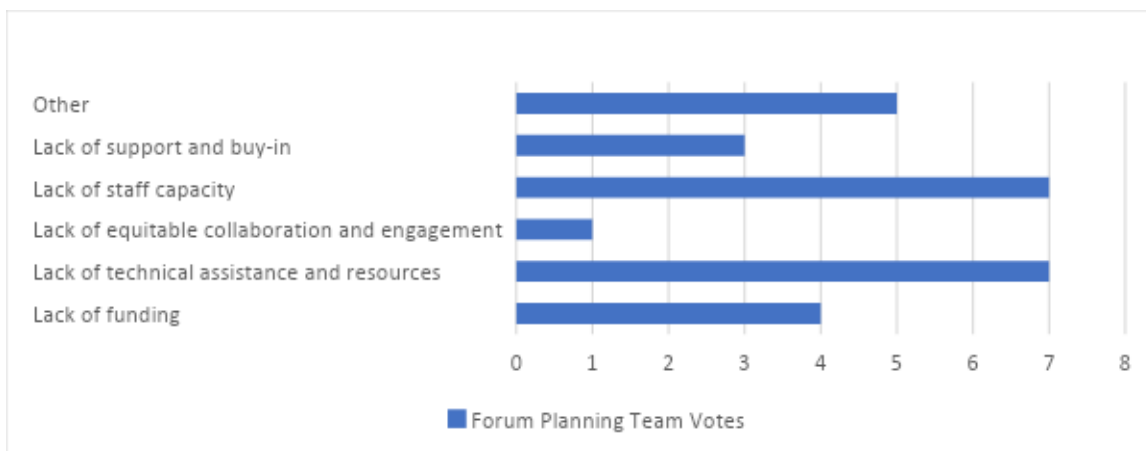
**Key Takeaways:**

- 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.

## Local Needs Identification

### Information Gathering and Survey Results

Based upon feedback collected from the Forum Planning Team and the results of the LGAC survey conducted prior to the Forum, local needs were identified and prioritized as shown below.



Survey respondents elaborated on responses and stated that although funding and technical assistance may be available at times, the process to access those resources are often difficult and complex. The challenges are often interconnected and cannot be resolved by only addressing one issue.

Survey respondents were then asked to identify topic areas for breakout discussions during the Forum. The following categories were identified:

- Partnership and Capacity Building
- Funding and Financing
- Outreach and Community Engagement
- Ensuring Equity and Inclusion
- Innovative Approaches

Using the barriers, assumptions, and local needs, three goals were developed to be discussed in breakout discussions. Forum attendees were divided into an in-person group and a virtual group, each with a subject matter expert as a designated facilitator. A notetaker documented the conversation. The virtual breakout group participants used Google Slides to provide feedback in addition to verbal discussions. The results of the breakout sessions are summarized below, and full details are provided in ***Appendix E: Breakout Group Slides and Highlights***.

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

To successfully integrate resilience into local planning processes, a community must first build buy-in and support for the initiative. Building buy-in for resilience can often be overwhelming to local governments that are already overburdened managing the day-to-day operations of a jurisdiction. In communities where there is political and community resistance to climate change, the motivation to pursue resilience can be completely lost.

To overcome these barriers, Forum participants suggested tailoring outreach and awareness to the community and utilizing locally relevant events and data to build buy-in. Resilience challenges must be linked to present-day local concerns and needs that present a sense of urgency for elected officials and community members to take action. For example, it will be easier to discuss flood resilience in the aftermath of a flood; however, a key challenge is to address concerns prior to suffering an impact from something like flooding.

#### ***Goal #2: Carrying out the planning process***

Once there is support for resilience, the planning process may begin. Local governments may be faced with the challenge of what government entity will take the lead for developing the plan; it may be the Floodplain/Stormwater Manager, Planning Department, or Environmental Department. This is often when local governments are faced directly with capacity and capability challenges as they determine who has the time to devote effort to leading the process and who has the expertise to inform the process.

An additional challenge is developing a strategy for ensuring equitable community engagement. Designing a robust and inclusive community engagement strategy that prioritizes vulnerable populations and historically marginalized communities is critical to ensuring that the climate resilience plan is developed in an equitable manner. These frontline communities, which are often the first to experience

the impacts of climate change and experience those impacts most severely, must be engaged throughout the planning process, and equipped with the tools to participate in the decision-making when developing plans.

### **Goal #3: Implementing the plan**

Once the plan has been developed, it is time to bring it to life and implement the strategies and actions identified in the plan. Funding the implementation of the plan is an obstacle that all local governments face. Whether resilience projects are incorporated into Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) or grant funds are required, determining a strategy to finance these projects is critical and complex. Many attendees highlighted the need for cross-department collaboration to avoid duplication of efforts and capitalize on economies of scale. In addition to building key partnerships, projects still require a dedicated lead champion to see the effort through as resilience projects can often take several years to implement. It is critical to maintain support and buy-in through implementation.

Once the key partners have been identified to lead the pursuit of obtaining funding, the next challenge is navigating a financing or grant process. These processes are often lengthy and complex, requiring a great deal of effort and knowledge to be successful. At the local level clear decisions must be made regarding how the implementation of projects will be prioritized. Several factors may inform this decision, including potential benefits, cost, scale, complexity, and other considerations. Overall, Forum participants agreed that there is a need for these processes to be streamlined and for additional technical assistance resources to be available to assist local governments with navigating financing and grant programs.

## **Key Recommendations**

The purpose of LGAC is to advise the Executive Council on how to effectively, equitably and expeditiously implement Chesapeake Bay Program (Bay Program) projects and determine actions required to engage, empower, and facilitate local governments in achieving goals of the Agreement.

The goal is to engage, empower and facilitate local government participation in the design, development and implementation of programs that will protect and restore the watershed. The following four recommendations were identified throughout the Forum.

### **Communications 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.**

Ensuring that community members understand the need for local governments to undertake resilience efforts is critical. The language used in communications must be clear, straightforward language that resonates with community concerns and priorities. Highlighting recent and current events that are a result of the changing climate, will aid in demonstrating the immediacy as well as the opportunities to see tangible results.

Establishing a repository of resources and customizable templates for local governments to use for communications will boost outreach efforts and are critical for

local governments with limited capacity and capabilities. Including local success stories will help local governments demonstrate that resilience is attainable for their community. Working first to identify community needs and values, then matching this with information sources is often an inclusive approach. Providing localized climate data, that is presented in simple language, will equip local leaders with the information needed to provide justification for investing in 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.**

A toolkit devoted to identifying pathways to integrate resilience into common existing planning process throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed will aid local governments when faced with the challenge of conducting the planning process. The tool kit should be localized and include model resilience focused plans and templates, criteria for project prioritization, and a portfolio of project recommendations based on hazards and landscapes.

Funding



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

Many funding sources are limited the types of activities that may be funded. Several grant opportunities support the development of new infrastructure, but do not provide funding for ongoing or deferred maintenance of existing infrastructure. In addition, funding for planning and concept design is extremely limited. Increasing the flexibility of funding sources and expanding the scope of existing programs can improve the functionality and condition of infrastructure, helping to build increased resilience for people and the built environment.


Seeking funding can often be complex and daunting to local government staff. Funding application process require a great deal of time and effort, which exceeds the day-to-day capacity of local governments and results in local governments passing on the opportunity to seek funding and subsequently implement projects.

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.**

Fostering an environment for elected officials and local government staff to develop a shared understanding of the need for resilience in their community and ideas of what is possible will inspire buy-in from these individuals. Building a network of support, of sharing ideas, of providing inspiration for those communities that might just be starting out to those who are further down the pathway of building a resilient community.

	<p>Increasing awareness of resilience issues not only increases understanding, but also buy-in and support to address these issues.</p> <p>Convening stakeholders to discuss these issues will provide the opportunity for participating entities to identify potential partnerships. Promoting partnerships, especially at a regional scale, contributes to peer-to-peer knowledge exchange, sharing of resources, and addressing hazards outside of jurisdictional boundaries.</p>
Capacity Building	
	<p><b>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.</b></p> <p>Directly addressing capacity challenges at the local level will provide a pathway to resolving many interconnected challenges. The creation of dedicated staff to aid local communities for resilience planning and grant writing will aid in supporting local governments with the necessary capacity and capabilities to further resilience and implement projects.</p> <p>By coordinating technical support with a regional perspective, planning and implementation efforts will be easier to replicate throughout the watershed. Staff housed within a regional or state-level organization can provide a cost-effective way to serve communities within the region.</p>

## Conclusion

The Forum served as a dedicated opportunity for local leaders and subject matter experts throughout the Chesapeake Bay watershed to discuss shared challenges and exchange knowledge about solutions to integrate resilience into local planning efforts. As the responsibilities of local governments continue to increase with more complex and compounding climatic challenges, so will the need to build in mechanisms to equip communities with the tools and resources to withstand and quickly recover from these challenges. However, local governments cannot overcome these challenges alone and require the support and resources of stakeholders including federal, state, academic, philanthropic, and private sector partners. The recommendations included in this report serve as a catalyst to support local governments as they build local community resilience and continue to strengthen the Chesapeake Bay, its tributaries, and surrounding lands.