

# Local Leadership Outcome

## *Management Strategy*



## Introduction

The long-term success of Chesapeake Bay conservation, restoration and protection efforts depends heavily on engaged citizen stewards and the leadership of local public officials. Currently, more than 600 local conservation and watershed organizations in the Bay region are educating and empowering citizens to restore and protect local streams and rivers. Building a larger, broader and more diverse constituency of stewards is vital to achieving local environmental protection and restoration and ultimately restoration of the Bay. The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement acknowledges the important role of local watersheds stewards and local government officials and commits partners to building knowledge and capacity of local stewards to achieve local and Bay restoration.

On December 3, 2014, stakeholders including local appointed and elected officials, senior local government resource managers, members of the training community and many others participated in a

workshop in Laurel, Maryland to discuss specific efforts, gaps and recommended actions for increasing knowledge and capacity for local officials to more successfully manage natural resources.

Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) members and other officials participating in the workshop stressed that local officials are diverse in experience, values and agendas; and that they vary in resource capacity. Increasing knowledge about the Chesapeake Bay watershed and relating the value of healthy waters to local priorities such as land use policies, community health, economic development and tourism will be important to enticing engagement of the uncommitted. Turnover is significant among local officials in some jurisdictions. This means it will be important to create and nurture a watershed culture of excellence that showcases and promotes local efforts, applauds local initiatives, and provides easy access to action-oriented conservation and restoration models for local officials to adapt and replicate.

**I. Goal, Outcome and Baseline**

This Agreement contains 10 goals for the conservation, protection and restoration of the Bay. The idea of “...increasing the capacity and knowledge of local officials...” resides under the Stewardship Goal. This Stewardship Goal statement is as follows:

*“Increase the number and diversity of local citizen stewards and local governments that actively support and carry out the conservation and restoration activities that achieve healthy local streams, rivers, and a vibrant Chesapeake Bay”.*

The local leadership outcome under the Stewardship Goal is as follows:

*“Continually increase the knowledge and capacity of local officials on issues related to water resources and in the implementation of economic and policy incentives that will support local conservation actions.”*

For the purposes of this management strategy, the term “local officials” includes elected and appointed officials and senior staff in local government. The outcome calls for increasing local officials’ knowledge and capacity in two specific areas: First, on issues related to water resources and second, in the implementation of economic and policy incentives. Both are intended to support local conservation actions.

According to LGAC members and signatory representatives, local officials’ knowledge of watershed issues and capacity to implement watershed restoration and protection initiatives varies quite dramatically throughout the watershed. The outcome measure has not been developed; therefore, currently there is no identified baseline. Once the correct metrics are determined to measure success of this outcome, the baseline can be determined using those metrics. The monitoring and assessing progress sections of this management strategy will relate back to those same metrics. The Chesapeake Bay Program is currently funding an effort to explore the development of these metrics. The development of a baseline involves multiple factors: the knowledge and capacity of local officials as well as existing programs and models. Baselines do not need to be exclusive of each other.

- Baselines should be more oriented to current activities and management actions. Baselines are the methods for current efforts, and our planned work will increase the range of methods and make them work better.
- Measuring the knowledge and capacity of local officials is difficult. This might be accomplished by a pre-work survey to measure the knowledge and capacity of local officials. People may be asked to self-determine their own knowledge. Furthermore, public opinion polls may be a useful tool in determining baseline for knowledge and capacity.

**II. Participating Partners**

The following partners have participated in the development of this strategy. A workplan to accompany this management strategy will be completed six months after this document is finalized. It will identify specific partner commitments for implementing the strategy.

**Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement Signatories**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• State of Maryland</li><li>• Commonwealth of Virginia</li><li>• District of Columbia</li><li>• Commonwealth of Pennsylvania</li><li>• State of Delaware</li><li>• State of West Virginia</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chesapeake Bay Commission</li><li>• US Environmental Protection Agency</li><li>• National Oceanographic Atmospheric Administration</li><li>• US Army Corps of Engineers</li><li>• Fish and Wildlife Service</li></ul> |
|---|---|

**Other Key Participants**

In addition to signatories listed above, many stakeholders, including interested members of the public have expressed interest via website in efforts related to development of the management strategy. At this stage of strategy development, it is not possible to determine which signatories and stakeholders will be participating in implementation of the strategy.

The December Local Leadership Workshop brought together nearly 60 local officials, senior local government program managers and many other stakeholders. Most of the workshop participants agreed to continue to support outcome development and implementation efforts.

**Local Engagement**

The nature of this outcome and resulting strategy is the building of knowledge and capacity of local officials; hence there is a specific, critical role for local government officials and associated local leaders. Additionally, watershed associations, nongovernmental organizations and other local groups play a critical role in reaching local officials and building this constituency for conservation action.

The management strategy includes the recommended actions identified by local officials from the local workshop held in December.

### III. Factors Influencing

The watershed is vast and its geology complex.

Local officials differ in recognition of long-term effects of public policy and mirror the range of personal and political goals which characterize the American public. Turnover rates among elected and appointed officials are unpredictable, complicating return on investment from training. Availability of resources - defined as expertise, time, staff and funds - vary widely. Some local officials are technically sophisticated; others do not yet use email. Often environmental issues are not routinely addressed in capital planning and annual budgets.

Some local officials are already committed Stewards of local resources and the Bay. Others will become committed if they recognize the correlation between local waters a healthy Bay and individualized local priorities such as economic development or tourism. The general electorate, particularly in coastal communities, is becoming more aware of rising sea levels and recurrent flooding.

The following have been identified as the key factors influencing ability to meet the goal and are listed beginning with the most critical to achieving the outcome:

1. Competing interests for resources (people, time, money) and for the attention of local officials.
2. Effective messaging and public relations defined as accurate measurement and clear communication of positive changes in the watershed from natural resource, economic, and cultural perspectives.
3. Size, geography and civic and political complexity of the watershed which creates distinct regional needs.
4. Community support for protection and restoration activities.
5. Wide disparity in level of existing knowledge and capacity among local officials.
6. Easy access to actionable and reliable information.
7. Political will.
8. Consistent and focused state and federal program implementation at the local level.
9. An historical lack of focus on conservation and natural resource issues.
10. Increased awareness of changing environmental conditions (e.g. climate change and flooding)
11. Local culture and societal norms relating to conservation actions.
12. Creating a culture of excellence to showcase outstanding local leaders and initiatives.
13. Available opportunities to increase knowledge at all levels of understanding.
14. Turnover rates of local elected and appointed officials.

## IV. Current Efforts and Gaps

Multiple organizations, groups of citizens and jurisdictions are already working to restore and protect the watershed. In many cases these efforts need to be enhanced, expanded and shared as models with other in the watershed. Examples include:

- Bay funded project to review leadership models and lessons learned across the watershed.
- State by state outreach and training via municipal organizations, state sponsored training and workshops for stormwater and green infrastructure through existing forums, such as VACo, MACo.
- Training: Watershed Stewards Academy (WSA), Natural Resources Leadership Institutes (NRLI), Soil and Water Conservation Districts.
- Peer to peer outreach and networking: LGAC, Chesapeake Bay Watershed Forum, Stormwater Partners Retreat, Agricultural Networking Forum, Environmental Finance Workshops, Choose Clean water and Water Resources Education Network conferences.
- Field opportunities for local officials: LGAC tours, Chesapeake Bay Foundation’s “Farmers to the Bay,” Allison Ferguson Foundation meaningful watershed trips.
- Certifications offered under municipal leagues and state associations, such as. MACo, VACo.
- Websites and webinars: Bay Program, Chesapeake Stormwater Network.

### Gaps

Information and resources are necessary to increase the number of local officials and watershed residents committed to responsible natural resource management. In reviewing current efforts, the following gaps were identified:

- Inadequate sharing of knowledge and information among jurisdictional agencies, conservation organizations and local officials.
- Minimal *outreach* to those outside the natural resources network.
- Lack of awareness about training offerings, training funds, and how to access them.
- Lack of time and funds for local officials to travel for training.
- Lack of information about financing options for local environment projects.
- No widely endorsed sources of information to enable local officials to identify and replicate action-oriented programs that have been successful in other jurisdictions.
- No baseline curriculum for the watershed.
- Success stories and committed local stewards visible only within the already committed conservation community.
- Inconsistent focus on natural resource management in educational seminars, conducted by municipal and state associations, for local elected officials.
- Planning District Commissions are inconsistent in delivering environment-focused training and information.
- States are inconsistent in prioritizing and funding environment-related initiatives.



**Cross Collaboration among Management Strategies**

The Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement is a complex agreement with many intersecting goals and outcomes. To establish a culture of excellence across the watershed, this outcome depends on the achievement of other outcomes. Local officials are first individuals who live and work in the watershed and second representatives of their constituents. They react to the articulated needs of their constituents, so a culture of stewardship at the grassroots level is important to the success of this outcome. Another outcome under the Stewardship Goal is the outcome for increasing citizen stewardship. While this management strategy does not articulate a management approach for citizen stewardship, it recognizes the importance of related management strategies under the Stewardship Goal on citizen stewardship and diversity to the success of this management strategy.

Similarly, an environmentally literate electorate helps drive the success of increasing citizen stewardship and engaging local leaders. Therefore, this management strategy relies on the success of achieving the Environmental Literacy Goal.

Likewise, the achievement of this outcome affects the success of many other goals and outcomes. Many of the other goals and outcomes rely on local implementation of actions. A strong culture of excellence in natural resource management of local officials will provide the framework for action necessary to achieve the vision articulated in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement.

Cross collaboration has been identified with the following other Bay Program goal implementation teams (GITs) and workgroups:

- Sustainable Fisheries
- Habitat
- Water Quality
- Healthy Watersheds
- Fostering Chesapeake Stewardship
- Environmental Literacy Workgroup
- Diversity Action Team

**Actions, Tools and Support to Empower Local Government and Others**

Stakeholders identified a variety of actions, tools, or technical support need to increase knowledge and capacity of local officials. This management strategy as a whole addresses this section. Many of these actions, tools, support are identified in current programs and gaps.

V. Management Approaches

In developing the local leadership management strategy, several approaches were identified as critical to expanding the knowledge and capacity of local officials. These approaches were developed by a group of local officials and educators. Specific suggestions for programs were provided. These warrant further discussion as to their feasibility and order of priority given the reality of limited resources. Specific suggestions will be considered during development of the workplan, which will be completed by the end of 2015.

The following management approaches set a framework for the Bay Program to identify knowledge and capacity building resources and programs already in place and to build upon what is already working. In some instances this partnership may consider establishing new programs. Lastly, these management actions should all be considered on a state-by-state and region-by-region basis given the variety of local needs, priorities and approaches to resources management. In addition, continually increasing the knowledge and capacity requires us to institute a system of learning for local officials.

Develop, enhance and expand training and leadership programs.

Given competing interests and, in many cases, limited resources, training and leadership programs play a key role in increasing the knowledge and capacity of local government officials to achieve local and regional goals for environmental conservation and restoration. Increasing the frequency, consistency, of training on a Bay-wide and regional basis will address the wide disparity in knowledge and capacity and will allow focus on specific region by region complexities and unique solutions and information needs. These training opportunities serve the important role of identifying approaches that may address local priorities while improving the local environment. The Bay Program Office is currently funding a project to review existing local leadership programs across the watershed and outside the watershed. Steps to achieve this action may include:

- Work with state, federal, private and NGO partners to identify and catalogue (by state, by region) the various awareness, training and leadership programs available to local officials.
- Evaluate utility and measure effectiveness of training and leadership programs.
- Provide recommendations to be used in the development of the two- year workplan.
- Based on these recommendations, the Bay Program will work with state, federal and NGO partners to enhance and expand training opportunities topically and in frequency based upon geographic and regional needs through existing grant programs, outreach activities and other mechanisms. Bay Program grants (e.g. local government funding, NFWF) should be considered as potential sources for expanding these programs.

Examples: Circuit rider of water resources leadership programs; municipal online training center; tie in citizen stewardship programs with leadership programs; core natural resources education component for newly elected.

Increase peer to peer knowledge transfer for local officials.

Recognizing that many people acquire knowledge directly from their interactions with other individuals, this approach seeks to pair existing leaders with emerging leaders or to pair a community who has experienced success with one who is in the early phase of implementation. Peer-to-peer programs may address political solutions and lessons learned and encourage leadership among jurisdiction where political environments are more challenging. To further address resources and regional complexities, peer-to-peer programs can also be delivered in the form of road shows where representatives of successful models may travel to another region of the watershed to focus on a specific solution relevant to the needs of that particular region. Steps to achieve this action may include:

- Review existing local officials peer-to-peer networking models, both inside and beyond the watershed, and identify lessons learned and areas needing improvement.
- Work with state and NGO partners and LGAC to coordinate and expand existing peer-to-peer forums including evaluating and identifying resource needs.
- Evaluate and catalogue lessons learned and adapt peer to peer networks for continual improvement.

Examples: Develop formal peer-to-peer program across jurisdictions; extend program to network through technical, professional and volunteers groups; institute metrics to assess benefits of this approach; utilize early adopters approach for communities willing to do peer-to-peer outreach

Improve “knowledge management”.

While there is a lot of available information, local officials express concern that the information is not readily accessible and in a form that is easy to interpret. This approach addresses the need to improve **access** to existing information to local officials and members of the public necessary to build community support. This may include expanded availability of online resources. Steps to achieve this action may include:

- Identify existing methods and outreach mechanisms used by states, federal agencies, NGOs to reach local officials and determine ways to enhance and improve these approaches.
- Establish best practices for working with less engaged municipalities and local audiences
- Periodically review approaches and identify ways to continually improve these approaches based upon needs of local officials.

Examples: Increase collaboration regionally; provide funding for municipal and regional visioning sessions; identify local organizations to assist with knowledge transfer; address techniques to address knowledge gaps; better establish teaching/training relationship with universities and community colleges.



Identify and improve key knowledge and information sources.

Local officials’ information needs differ from those of the general public or the scientific community. Development of key information sources will be created as part of this approach. However, this approach should also address developing the similar messages for public consumption in order to build community support and address political obstacles perceived by local decision makers. This approach addresses the need for messaging targeted to local officials. Steps to achieve this action may include:

- Identify and prioritize key information and information sources that may benefit local officials (e.g. economic benefits, cost benefits, multiple benefits of stormwater management like socioeconomic and community improvement for under-represented populations, climate change, etc.)
- Assure that information is delivered in a way that is relevant and clear to local officials
- Continue to improve and develop key messages (state or regionally determined) to build knowledge and capacity for local officials.

Examples: News releases targeted to local officials; case studies of economic justifications for restoration

**Approaches Targeted to Local Participation**

The local leadership management strategy by its nature is targets the participation of local stakeholders. While the management strategy focuses on increasing knowledge and capacity of local officials, it acknowledges the important role of citizen stewards in driving local action.

**Cross-Outcome Collaboration and Multiple Benefits**

Information and resources are necessary to increase the number of local officials and watershed residents committed to responsible natural resource management, which is identified as a gap. In order to support conservation actions, much less take responsibility for implementation, local officials need to possess at least a basic understanding of certain issues. The following management strategies identify the need to increase local officials’ knowledge as being necessary to achieve the outcome. Steps to achieve this action may include:

- Coordinate with the development of two-year workplans for Citizen Stewardship, Diversity, Environmental Literacy management strategies to ensure actions are complimentary.
- Review management strategies for other outcomes to ensure an appropriate focus on engaging local officials and providing support to increase their capacity to achieve those outcomes.
- Periodically assess other Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement goals and identify information sharing or knowledge transfer needs and opportunities in order to enhance knowledge and capacity of local officials.

- Coordinate input as part of two-year workplan for related Agreement goals and outcomes.

## VI. Monitoring Progress

For this outcome, there is no current baseline established. Prior to beginning this effort, success criteria will be established and metrics in place to determine progress. The following tools and resources have been identified to assist in progress monitoring.

- Utilize surveying instruments such as before and after training surveys.
- Explore innovate approaches to gain baseline data (e.g. trivia contests, games, creative phone apps, etc).
- Consider basic tracking using number of contacts and meetings.
- Utilize social network diagrams technique and social media for determining progress.
- Track the number of people going through the leadership academies as one mode of progress monitoring.
- Use the Chesapeake Stormwater Network annual survey of members to assess programming.
- Determine the different mechanisms for the different categories of local officials (e.g., elected versus senior staff).
- Count how many exchanges happened, how many commitments made and completed.
- Count the number of municipalities that have built-in requirements for certification or training.
- Track the number of Local officials and mentors upon graduation of the program and track how many maintain their mentorship.
- Include an estimated number of educational programs, online resources, etc. Connect this back to the baseline of the range of methods for increasing knowledge and capacity.

## VII. Assessing Progress

Progress in the building of knowledge and capacity in local officials will be assessed every two years. At our December workshop, many officials agreed to participate in this initial effort to determine success and assess progress criteria, hence direct involvement with our target audience is existing. Throughout the initial assessment period, local officials will be a part of the process to determine how progress is determined including criteria, scope, scale and adaptive management techniques utilized. It is anticipated that this strategy may require 1 or more two year cycles to fully determine whether the initial effort has been successful.

### **VIII. Adaptively Manage**

Following the first two-year review period and based on the information obtained through surveys and other assessment criteria, programmatic changes will occur to maximize the effectiveness of the methods utilized for local leadership knowledge and capacity building program success.

### **IX. Biennial Workplan**

Biennial workplans for each management strategy will be developed by December 2015. It will include the following information:

- Each key action
- Timeline for the action
- Expected outcome
- Partners responsible for each action
- Estimated resources