CLOSING GAPS IN TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN THE CHESAPEAKE BAY WATERSHED

Presentation to Local Government Leadership Workgroup

May 21, 2026

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY INNOVATION CENTER

Agenda

1. Project Overview
2. Data Collection
3. Inventory Findings & Results
4. Recommendations
5. Discussion

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Project Overview

Project Goals

- To produce an **inventory and gap analysis** of current local government assistance programs across the Chesapeake Bay region.
- To make **recommendations** for where additional resource allocation towards technical assistance should be made by decision makers in state and federal government.

Results will support the Watershed Agreement's **Local Leadership Outcome** to "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".

Results will also support other Watershed Agreement goals that are highly dependent on local government outcomes, such as those for water quality, habitats, and land conservation.

Key Tasks

1. Identify and **inventory** existing free local government technical assistance programs that align with the Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement outcomes.

2. Compile **standardized information** about each technical assistance program.

3. Define and **analyze gaps** in existing technical assistance programs.

4. **Recommend approaches** to fill gaps in technical assistance to local governments to drive increased implementation towards meeting watershed agreement outcomes.

Methodology & Timeline

Four Phases

Phase I: Background Research and Steering Committee Kick-Off February - April 2025

- Desk Review
- Scoping Interviews
- Steering Committee Kick-Off

Phase II: Technical Deep Dive April - January 2026

- Data Collection Methodology Development
  - Inclusion criteria for TA programs
  - Standardized information for each TA program
- Data Collection Interviews
  - All Bay states
  - Different levels of government and organizations
  - Urban, suburban and rural areas of the Bay
  - Trying to be representative when we can't interview everyone
- Case Studies (3-5)
  - Profiles of existing TA programs and models
  - What works well

Phase III: TA Program Inventory and Gap Analysis (September 2025 - March 2026)

- Spreadsheet TA inventory
- Report identifying gaps in TA

Phase IV: Final Report & Recommendations (March 2026 - May 2026)

- Recommendations on addressing identified gaps

Inclusion Criteria For Inventory

- **TA Definition:** "[T]echnical assistance is defined as a service provided to local government by an outside organization or agency, which may otherwise be performed by staff or secured through normal procurement processes, e.g. municipal engineering services."

- Included entities: Provision of free TA to local governments relevant to the Chesapeake Bay Agreement goals

The TA Inventory is a supply-side inventory; it does not show demand from local governments for these TA services

Types of TA Provider Organizations

Categories of TA Providers	Example TA Providers/Programs
State Government	Departments of Planning, Natural Resources and Conservation, Environmental Quality, Forestry
Local Government	Counties (in some states)
Federal Government Agencies	USFS, NRCS
Quasi-Governmental	Planning District Commissions (PDCs), Soil and Water Conservation Districts (SWCDs), NFWF
State and Regional Networks of LGs	Municipal Leagues, County Associations, Stormwater Consortiums
Universities	University of Delaware, University of Maryland
Nonprofit Organizations	Alliance for the CB, Friends of the Rappahannock

Data Collection

54 completed Interviews

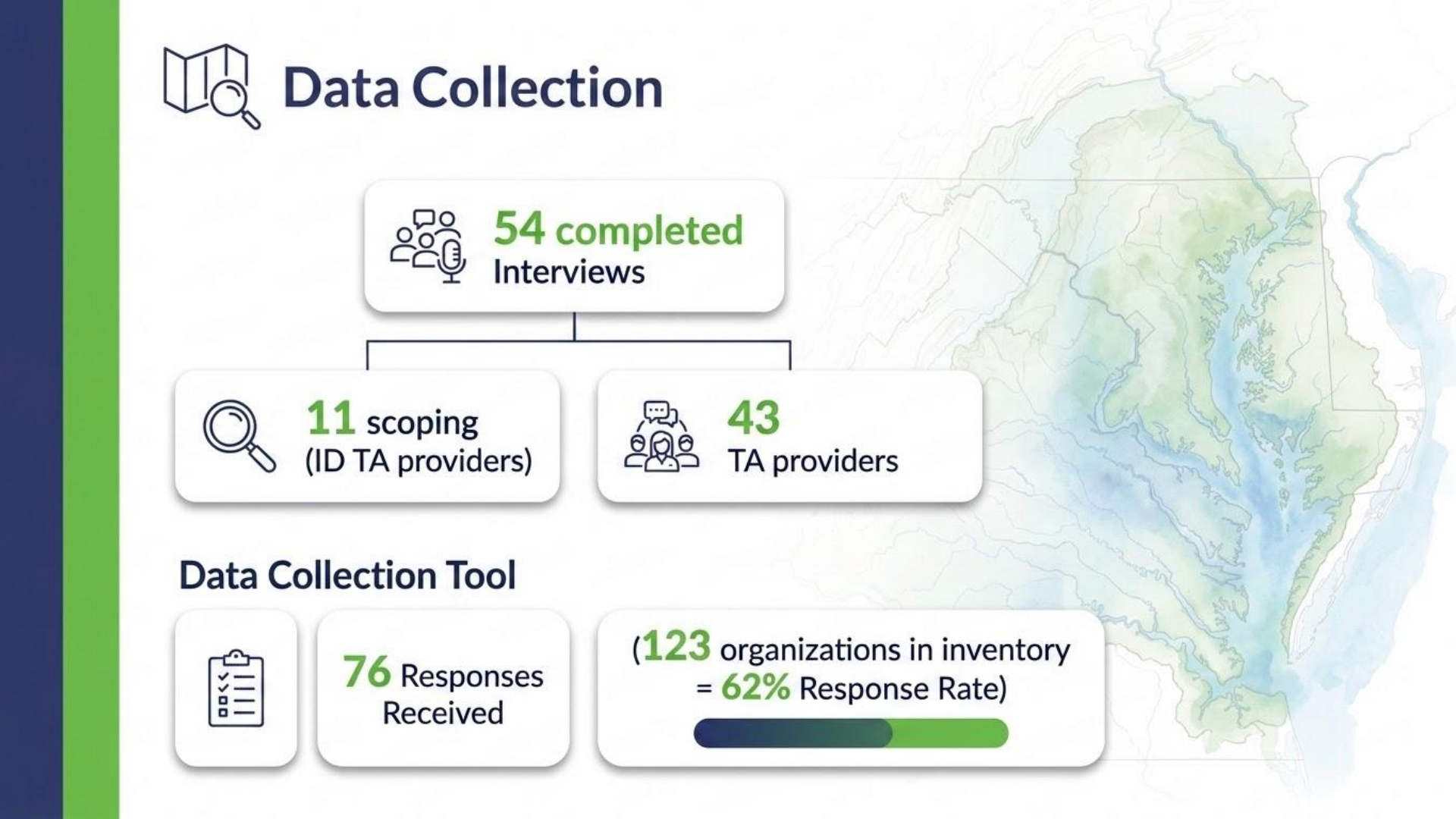
11 scoping (ID TA providers)

43 TA providers

Data Collection Tool

76 Responses Received

(**123** organizations in inventory = **62%** Response Rate)



Data Collection Standardized Information

Question	Options / Format
Q1: TA Entity Information - Name of Organization	Open text response
Q2: TA Entity Information - Type of Organization	Federal, state, county gov, nonprofit, university, regional entity (planning district, quasi-governmental), other
Q3: TA Entity Information - Description of Org. Mission	Open text response
Q4: TA Entity Information - Description of Org. TA	Open text response
Q5: Geographic Scale - Jurisdictional scale(s) of TA	Municipality, county, state, regional, Chesapeake Bay-wide, national, other (e.g., MS4)

Data Collection Standardized Information

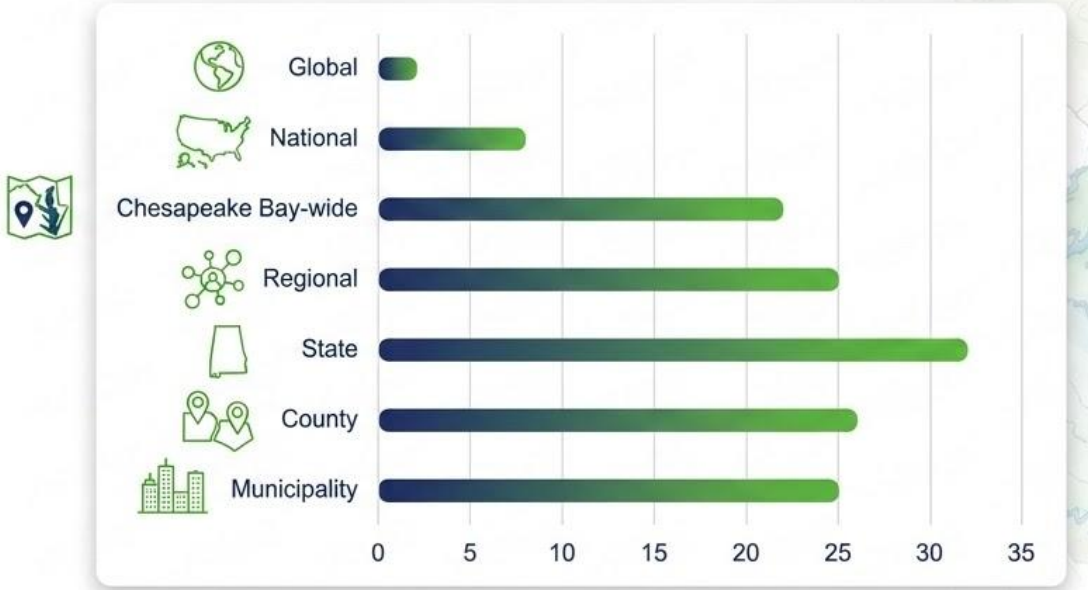
Question	Description & Response Options
Q6: Geography	**Specific geography of TA** Open text response for specific county etc…
Q7: Cost	**Cost to Local Governments for TA** Free, fee, cost-share, other
Q8: TA Method	**Implementation Method** Virtual, in-person, site visits, workshops, newsletters, online discussion forums, other
Q9: TA Content	**Goals/Outcomes** Thriving Habitat and Wildlife, Clean Water, Healthy Landscapes, Engaged Communities
Q10: TA Services	**Services Offered** Education for local government officials; IT; policy assistance; identifying and planning for projects; securing funding; implementing projects; maintenance and management; monitoring; other.

Data Collection Standardized Information

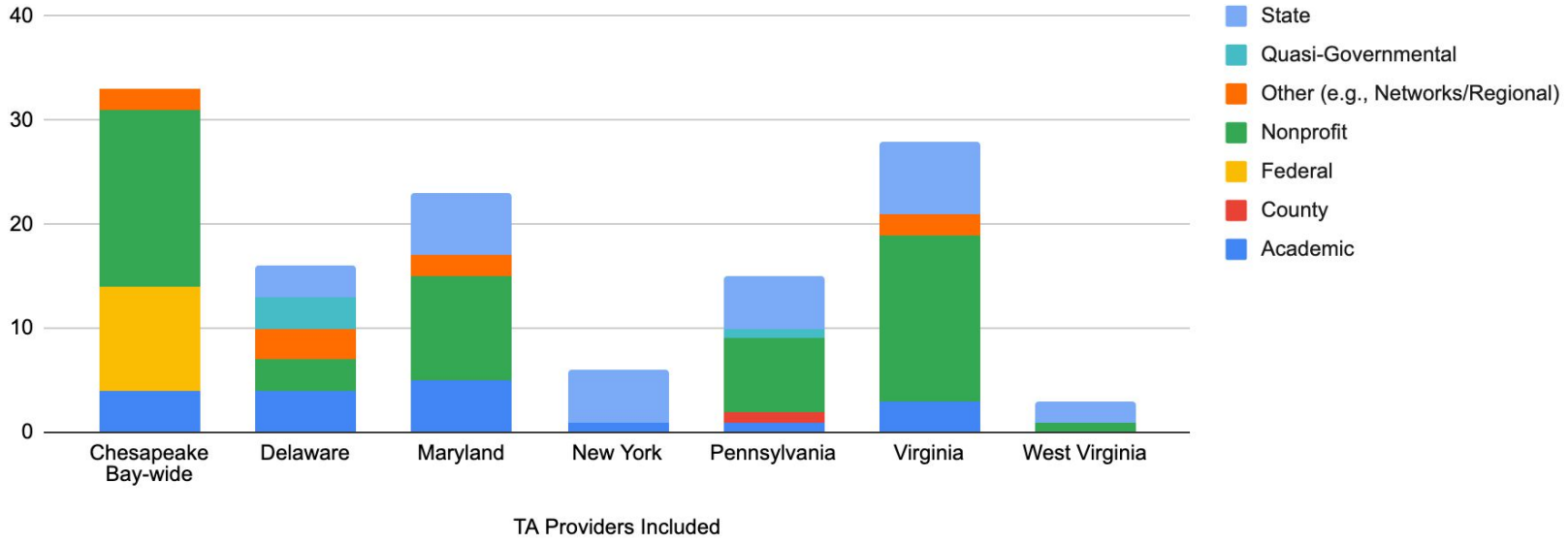
Question	Description & Response Options
Q11: Types of Communities Served	Rural or small-town communities; Coastal or flood-prone communities; Communities with limited local government capacity or resources; Urban or industrial communities facing infrastructure or pollution challenges; Agricultural Communities; Suburban; Urban; other
Q12: Intensity of TA	**% Time Organization Spends on TA** 0-25%, 25-50%, 50-75%, 75-100%
Q13: Governments Reached	**Number of Local Governments Reached (Past 5 Years)** 0-5, 5-10, 10-20, 20-50, over 50
Q14: Comments	**Additional Comments** Open text response

Results + Findings

TA to local governments in the Bay benefits from the larger geographic scales at which TA providers operate



123 organizations in TA inventory

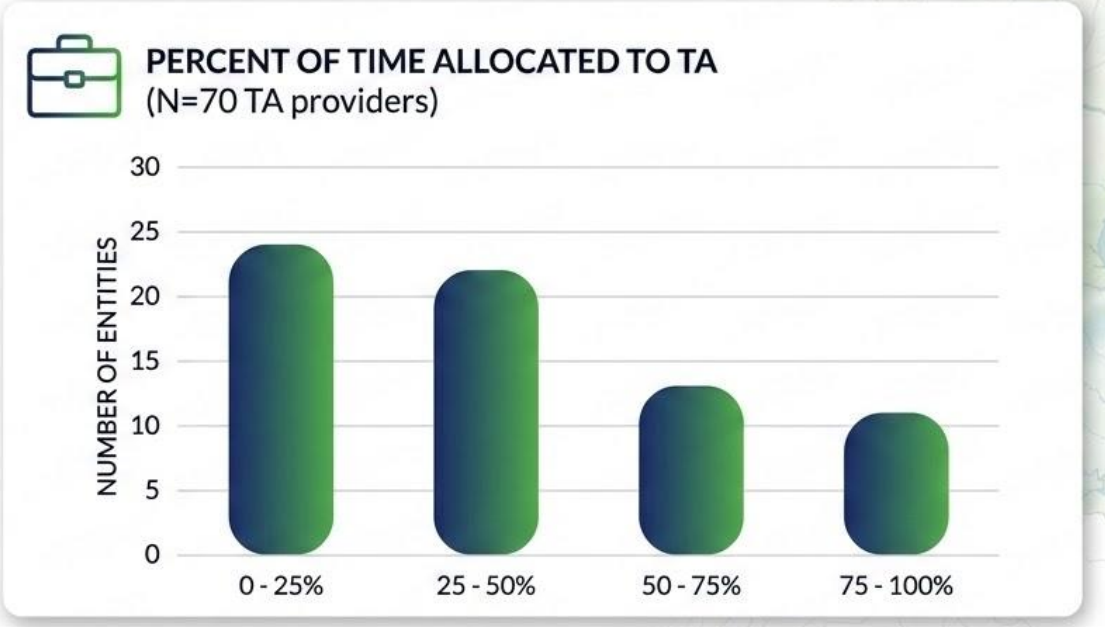


TA providers use a broad range of methods to deliver TA, with most providers using more than one method

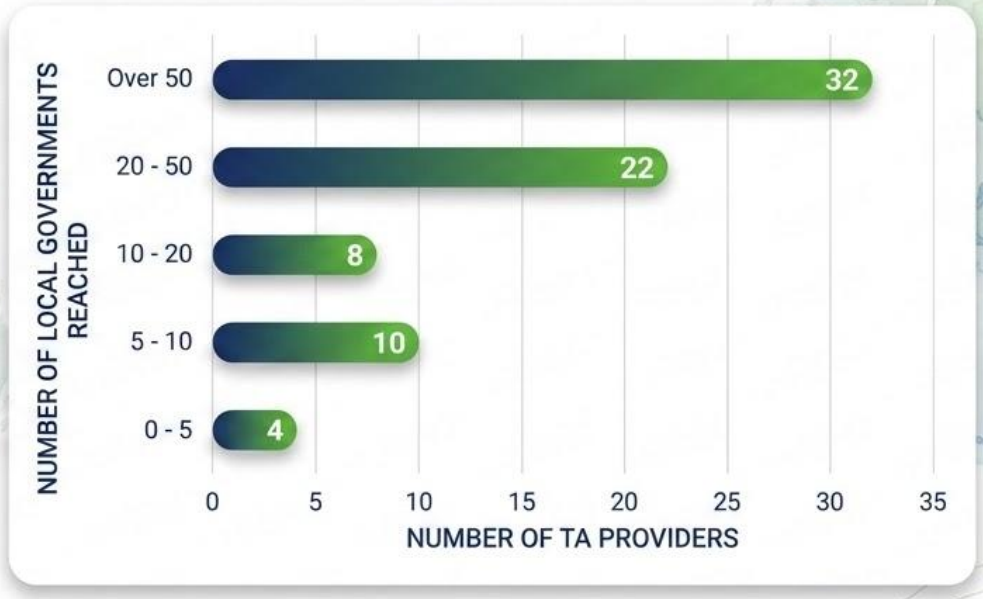
TA is more heavily concentrated within education and planning activities, with gaps for TA in late project cycle activities.

Most TA providers allocate staff time and resources to other activities in addition to TA.

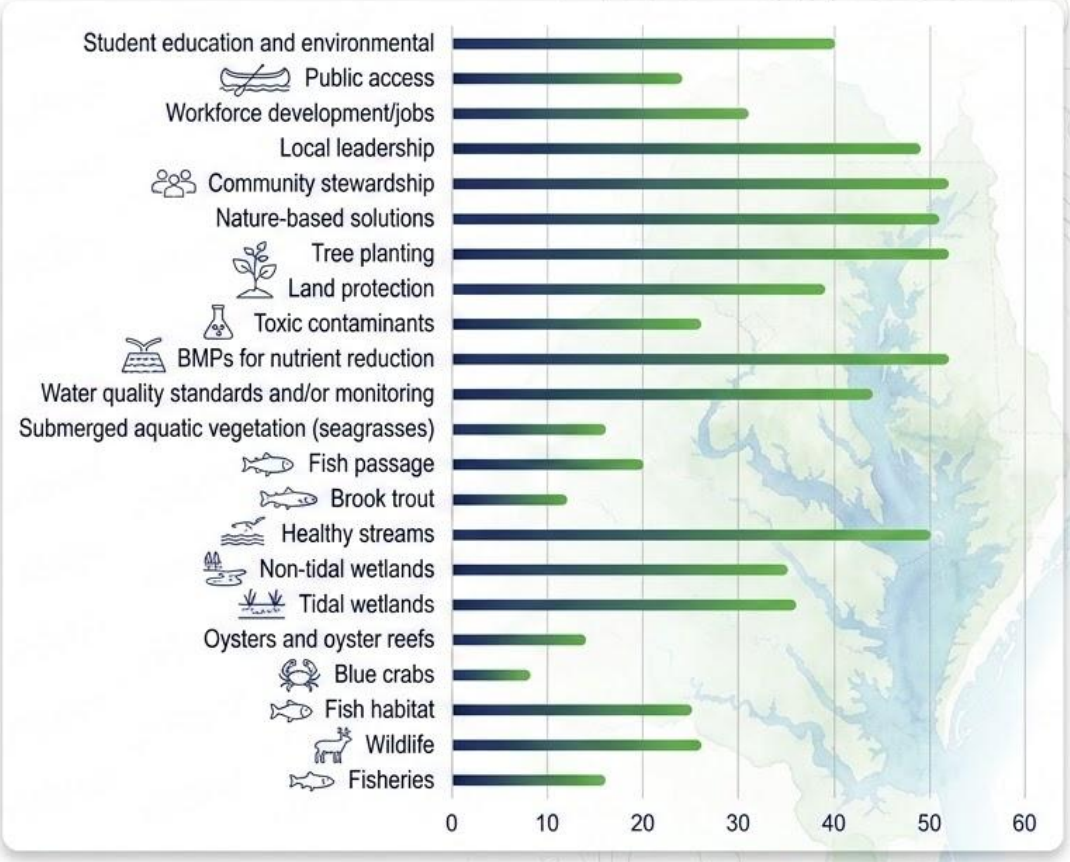
This suggests TA providers have diverse operational mandates.



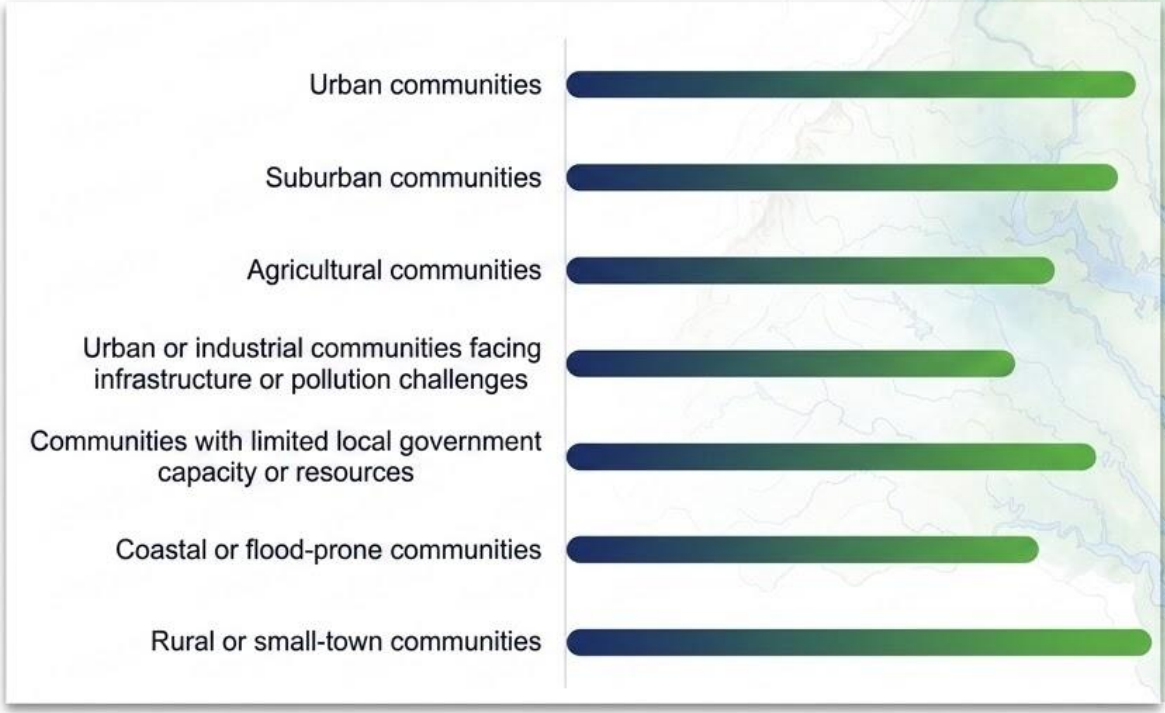
More information is required to understand the degree to which TA providers are meeting demand for TA from local governments.



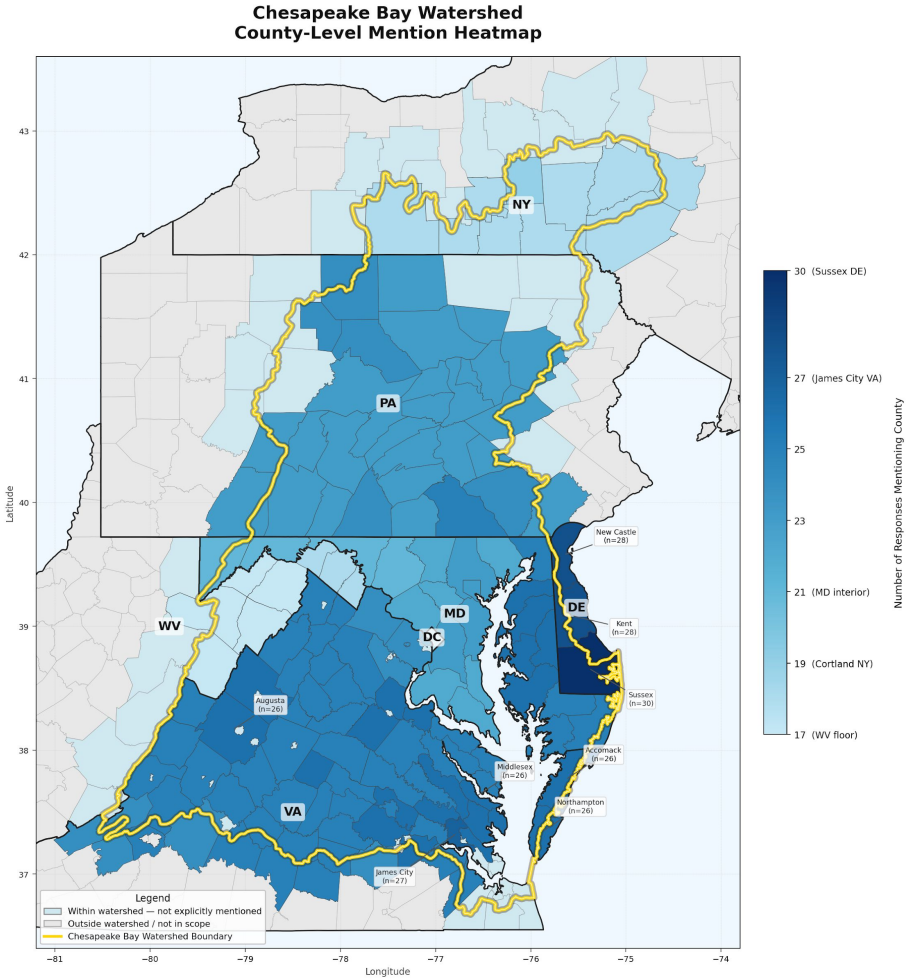
Results suggest that toxic contaminants, fish passage, and public access are Bay Agreement goals that need additional TA resource allocation.



TA providers are assisting a broad range of government and community types across the Bay watershed.



Geographic coverage of TA providers shows differing intensities of potential TA across the Bay watershed, with more coverage closer to the Bay itself.



Sources: US Census Bureau TIGER/Line 2022 county shapefiles; Chesapeake Bay Program open data watershed boundary.
Mention counts reflect number of responses referencing each county directly or via named geographic units (watersheds, states, regions, river basins). n = 76 responses.

Recommendations

Short-term

1. Share results of the TA Inventory with local governments across the Bay Watershed through existing + new channels.
2. Provide convening opportunities for TA providers across the Bay Watershed to share information, best practices, and lessons learned.
3. Target currently available TA to the local governments that need it most.
4. Target currently available TA to priority geographic regions.
5. Explore ways to facilitate more resources for TA that supports local governments in improving toxic contaminant reduction, public access, and fish passage projects.

Recommendations

Medium - term

1. Support research on the effectiveness of existing TA models.
2. Explore methods to solicit demand-side information from local governments on TA priorities and needs.
3. Support identification of private sources of TA for local governments.
4. Support states in the alignment of additional resources for TA to resource allocation for project implementation.

TA Inventory Entry

The University of Maryland Environmental Finance Center (EFC) is one of 29 EFCs across the country funded by EPA through the Agency's Environmental Finance Center Grant Program. The EFC grant program was established with funding from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) to address technical and capacity challenges communities have in accessing federal sources of funding and finance for addressing pollution and infrastructure requirements. Through EPA's EFC grant program. "...technical assistance providers will help communities develop and submit project proposals, including State Revolving Fund (SRF) applications for Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funding. EFCs will support communities with technical assistance to identify infrastructure solutions. These entities will provide states, Tribes, and local governments with technical assistance services to advance health and environmental protections."

Data Category	Response
Broadest Jurisdictional Scale of Operation	Regional
Specific Geography of Operation	Mid-Atlantic Region (within and outside the Chesapeake)
Cost to Local Government	Depends on the community's circumstances and EFC's existing funding streams.
Methods of TA Delivery	Virtual, In-Person, Site Visits, Workshops, Newslatters, Online Discussion Forums
Chesapeake Bay Agreement Goals Addressed Blue text reflects areas of work added by respondent	Wildlife, Fish habilat, Tidal wetlands, Non-ridal wetlands, Healthy streams, Water quality standards and/or monitoring, BMPs for nutrient (nitrogen, phosphorus, sediment) reduction, Toxic contaminants, Land protection, Tree planting, Nature-based solutions, Community slewardship, Local leadership, Public access, funding and finance
TA Services Offered	Education for local government officials, Policy assistance, Identifying and planning for projects, Securing funding and financing for projects, Implementing projects
Types of Communities Served	Rural or small-town communities, , Coastal or flood-prone communities, Communities with limited local government capacity or resources, Urban or industrial communities facing infrastructure or pollotion challenges, Agricultural communities, Suburban communities, Urban communities
Percentage of Time Organization Spends on TA to Local Governments	75 - 100%
Number of Local Governments Reached in Previous Five (5) Years	Over 50

Discussion

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