

Chesapeake Bay Program Local Engagement Strategy



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Purpose

The purpose of this strategy is to present a road map to guide Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) Goal Implementation Teams (GITs) and workgroups in engaging with local government and local elected officials to provide knowledge and solicit support for the goals and outcomes of the Watershed Agreement. The strategy defines the roles of the different players involved and articulates a mechanism for creation and delivery of messages that both meet CBP needs and relate to local government priorities.

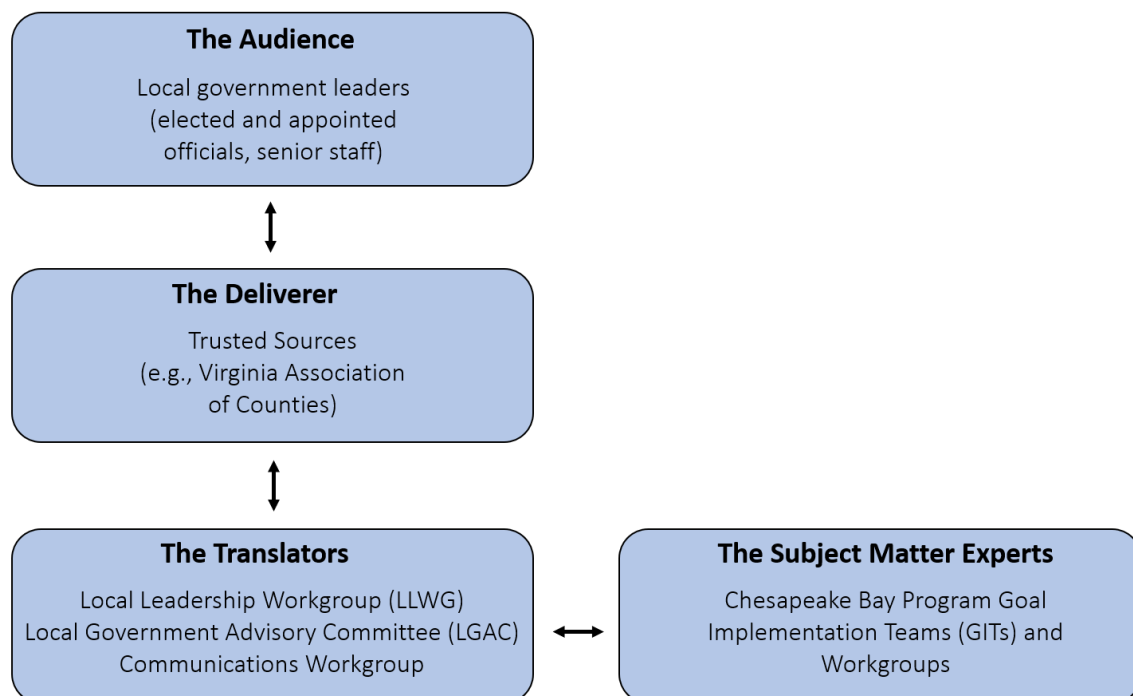
Background

The first iteration of the CBP biennial strategy review system (SRS) identified local government engagement as the top challenge facing outcome leads. In fact, 29 out of 31 outcomes identified local government engagement as a key step to meeting and their outcome targets as listed in the *Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*.

As such, at their November 2018 quarterly progress meeting, the CBP Management Board asked the Local Leadership Workgroup (LLWG) to work with the Local Government Advisory Committee (LGAC) to develop a strategy to guide CBP engagement with local government leaders (defined for this strategy as elected, appointed and senior staff).

This document presents this strategy and defines the roles of different CBP groups in providing and translating information into messages that resonate with the interests, perspectives and priorities of local governments. It also proposes a method of delivery through state and regional networks of local governments (i.e., Trusted Sources). To form the foundation of this strategy, recommendations and lessons learned from previous CBP-led initiatives and contracted projects (Appendix 1) have been distilled and incorporated.

Who are the Players Involved?



There are four main groups that each play a unique role in this strategy. Local governments make up the first group—the **audience** the CBP is trying to reach. The **deliverer** of CBP messages are Trusted Sources that work to effectively support, represent, promote and protect the interests of local governments. Trusted sources include local government associations such as state association of counties, municipal leagues and other organizations where there are opportunities for peer-to-peer sharing. These organizations have well-established relationships with local governments and can therefore perform an important role in facilitating the exchange of information between them and the CBP. Several representatives from these Trusted Sources are active participants in the LLWG. The workgroup maintains a list of Trusted Sources in the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The **translators** include the LLWG, LGAC and CBP Communications Workgroup:

- The LLWG was formed to accomplish the local leadership outcome in the *Watershed Agreement*, “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.” The LLWG works on actionable items and projects to achieve this outcome.
- The LGAC advises the Chesapeake Executive Council on how to effectively implement projects and engage the support of local governments to achieve the goals of the *Watershed Agreement*.
- The Communications Workgroup offers communications advice to the CBP Communications Office to help this office meet its goals of: (1) supporting the communications needs of CBP partners, and (2) spurring public action through consistent messaging and media coverage, comprehensive branding and promotion, stakeholder outreach and coordinated internal and external communications.

The translators work with members of CBP GITs and workgroups—i.e. **the subject matter experts**—to gather and translate information into language that resonates with local governments.

Process

The first step in engaging with local governments is to work with subject matter experts to identify local engagement needs that also help meet outcomes of the *Watershed Agreement*. The second step is to strategically cluster and translate CBP information into terms that local leaders care about. The [2017 Ecologix report](#), *Strategic Outreach Education Program for Local Elected Officials in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed*, states that “the more a local official sees an action as addressing a local priority, the more likely that elected official is to take action.” The report recommends four local government priorities to use as the “portals” through which to communicate CBP-related goals. These four priorities are:



Economic Development



Public Health and
Safety



Infrastructure
Maintenance and
Finance



Education

Photos courtesy of Chesapeake Bay Program flickr

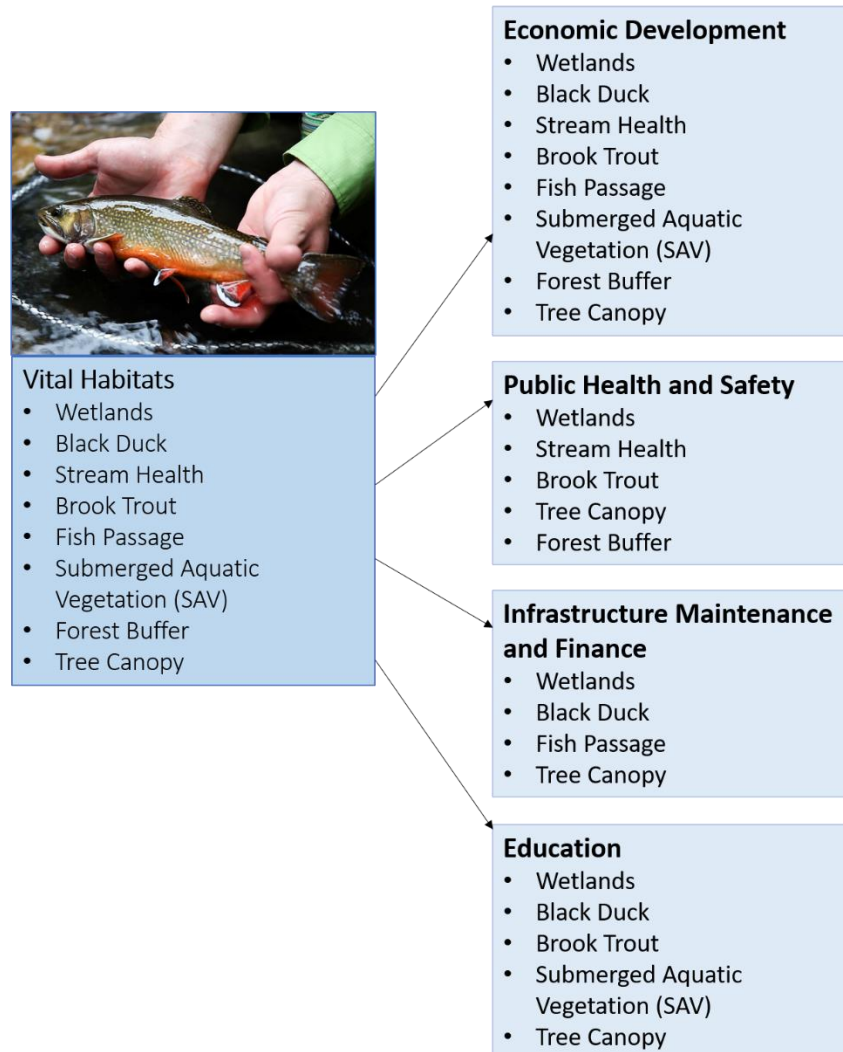
Current CBP Local Engagement Needs

As of spring 2019, most CBP local engagement needs relate to meeting the goals and outcomes in the [*Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement*](#). There are 31 outcomes that fall under 10 goals in the *Watershed Agreement*. CBP GITs and workgroups that oversee the outcomes have developed management strategies and logic and action plans detailing how each outcome will be met. Out of the 31 outcomes, 29 have identified local government engagement as one of their top needs or challenges in their respective management strategy and logic and action plan:

- Black Duck.
- Blue Crab Abundance.
- Blue Crab Management.
- Brook Trout.
- Fish Habitat.
- Fish Passage.
- Forage Fish.
- Riparian Forest Buffer.
- Oysters.
- Stream Health.
- Submerged Aquatic Vegetation.
- Tree Canopy.
- Wetlands.
- 2017 Watershed Implementation Plans.
- 2025 Watershed Implementation Plans.
- Water Quality Standards Attainment and Monitoring.
- Healthy Watersheds.
- Toxic Contaminants Policy and Prevention.
- Climate Resiliency Adaptation.
- Land Use Options Evaluation.
- Land Use Metrics and Methods.
- Protected Lands.
- Citizen Stewardship.
- Diversity.
- Environmental Literacy and Planning.
- Local Leadership.
- Public Access Site Development.
- Students MWEEs.
- Sustainable Schools.

The challenges are to: 1) relate outcome objectives to local government priorities; and 2) cluster and translate Bay-specific language into messages that are consumable and attractive to local governments.

Relating Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement Outcomes to Local Government



The above figure is an example of how the eight outcomes under the Vital Habitats Goal can be reorganized under the four local government priority areas. It is important to note that outcomes may pertain to one or more of the four priority areas. For example, increasing tree canopy can:

1. Reduce energy costs associated with cooling of residential buildings, increase home value and promote spending in central business districts (economic development).
2. Decrease crime, clean the air and reduce temperatures in the summertime (public health and safety).
3. [Intercept and filter rainfall](#) before it enters stormwater and sewerage systems, similar to other methods of green infrastructure (infrastructure maintenance and financing).
4. Foster environmental stewardship and education through tree planting events.

Clustering and Translating CBP-related Language into Messages that Resonate with Local Governments

The below example shows how CBP language from some of the outcomes under the Vital Habitats Goal can be clustered and re-written into language that resonates with local government perspectives and their priority of infrastructure maintenance and financing.

Chesapeake Bay Program Language

Wetlands act as natural filters by absorbing nutrients and sediment from overland flow and shallow groundwater before it enters the Bay.

Black ducks are a species representative of the health of the tidal marshes across the watershed.

Dams and other obstructions block the natural migration of diadromous fish to their historic spawning habitats.

Urban tree canopy provide air quality, water quality and habitat benefits throughout the watershed.



Local Priority: Infrastructure Maintenance and Financing

Green infrastructure practices, such as wetlands and tree canopy, offer a relatively inexpensive solution to addressing flooding and stormwater challenges associated with increasing population and deteriorating water infrastructure. The creation and protection of wetlands, including those that support habitat for black duck and other species, can benefit localities by soaking up stormwater and dampening storm surges. Planting trees can mitigate flooding because trees slow down the flow of rain onto roads and into storm drains and local rivers. In addition to green infrastructure, the destruction of dams that obstruct the migration of fish can also reduce flooding potential after heavy rainfall.

Creating Communications Content

The next step is to create content that will distribute translated messages to local government leaders through a variety of communications vehicles. LGAC members have stated that local officials learn and seek information in different ways. Therefore, messages should be disseminated multiple times and in different formats. Formats include webinars, short two-minute videos, blogs, infographics and handbooks. In accordance with this strategy, it is recommended that all CBP messaging and content be created in collaboration with the translator groups—the LLWG, LGAC and the Communications Workgroup—and promoted through the Trusted Sources as the deliverers. As stated in the Ecologix report, the CBP can take advantage of Trusted Sources' websites, newsletters, ongoing meetings, trainings, workshops and conferences to distribute information.

Factors Influencing Success

The following are key factors influencing the CBP's ability to successfully engage with local government leaders:

- Giving well-timed messaging. The most effective time for engagement is before local governments pass their budgets.
- Competing interests for resources (people, time, money) and the attention of local government leaders.
- Size, geography and civic and political complexity of the watershed, which creates distinct regional needs and priorities.

- Community awareness of, and support for protection and restoration activities, along with coordinated communications to keep the public informed.
- Political will and consistent and focused state and federal program implementation at the local level.
- Turnover rates of local elected and appointed officials.

Monitoring Progress and Adaptively Managing

GITs and workgroups that have identified local engagement as one of their primary needs will track and assess the effectiveness of this strategy over time through the biennial strategy review system and updates to their logic and action plans.

Appendix 1. Past and Current Local Engagement Projects and Initiatives

- Maintain Healthy Watersheds Goal Implementation Team's Local Engagement Workgroup, 2013-2014
- Institute for Environmental Negotiation, University of Virginia (IEN) [Chesapeake Bay Stakeholder Assessment](#), 2015
- Environmental Leadership Strategies [Chesapeake Watershed Local Leadership Development Programs](#), 2015
- Ecologix Group [Strategic Outreach Education Program for Local Elected Officials in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed](#), 2017
- Local Government Engagement Initiative
 - Next Generation Case Studies, 2017
- [Healthy Watersheds Forestry TMDL Forest Retention Study](#), 2015-2017
- [Chesapeake Conservation Land Use Policy Toolkit](#), 2017
- [12 BMP Co-benefit Fact Sheets](#)
- Local Government Advisory Committee, *current*
- Local Leadership Workgroup, *current*
- Communications Workgroup, *current*
- 2016-2021 Strategic Communications Plan for the CBP, *current*
- Communications Workgroup WIP Engagement Action Team, *current*
- Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed 101 handbook and Tree Canopy Curriculum, *in development*