

Chesapeake Bay Program Local Engagement Strategy



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May 2019

Approved by the Chesapeake Bay Program Management Board, insert date

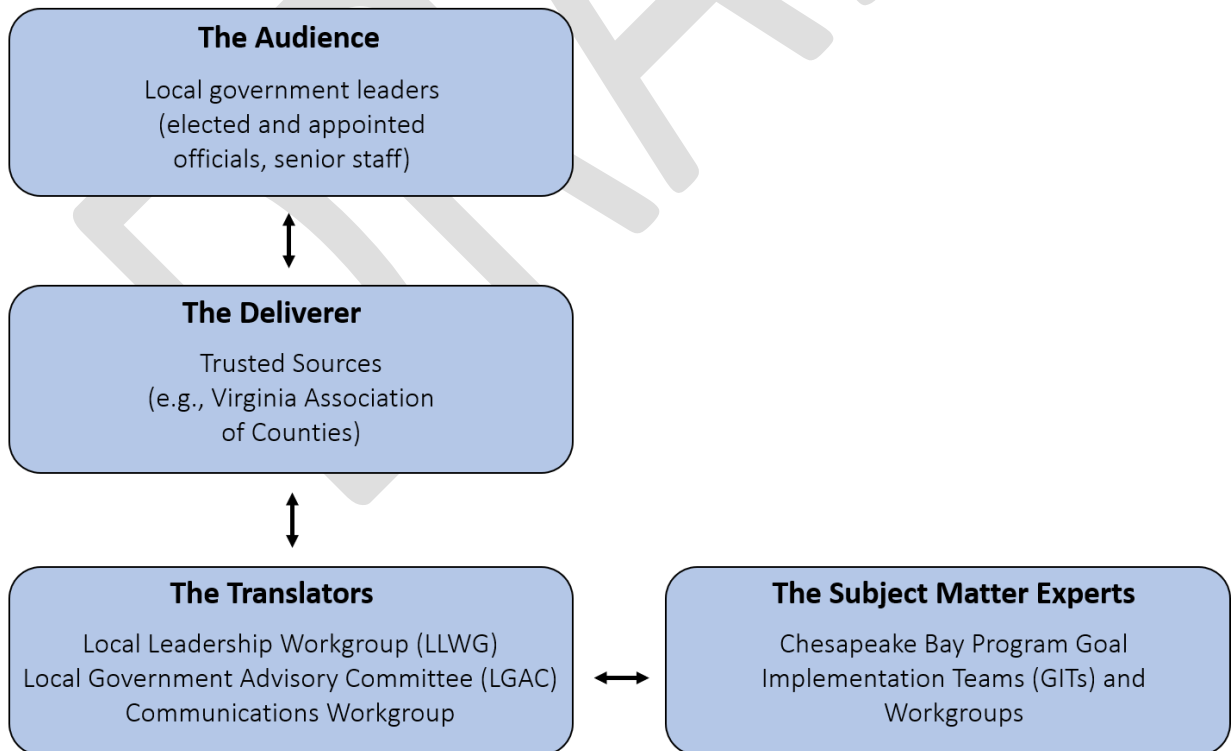
Purpose:

The purpose of this strategy is to present a road map for Chesapeake Bay Program (CBP) engagement with local government leaders. 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:

Many CBP Goal Implementation Teams and Workgroups have identified local government engagement as a key step to meeting goals and outcomes in the 2014 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) and develop a strategy for CBP engagement with local government leaders. This document presents this strategy and defines the roles of different CBP groups in providing and translating information into messages that resonate with local governments’ interests and perspectives. 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 of players involved in this strategy. Each group serves a different role. Local government leaders, including elected officials, appointed officials, and senior staff, 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 the Maryland Association of Counties (MACO), Virginia Association of Counties (VACO), and the Pennsylvania State Association of Township Supervisors (PSATS). These organizations have well-established relationships with local governments and can therefore provide an important role in information exchange between the CBP and local government leaders. Several representatives from Trusted Sources are active participants in the LLWG. A list of Trusted Sources in the Chesapeake Bay watershed is currently maintained by the workgroup.

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

- The Local Leadership Workgroup (LLWG) was formed to accomplish the local leadership outcome in the Chesapeake Bay 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 Local Government Advisory Committee (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 Bay Agreement.
- The Communications Workgroup offers communications advice to the Chesapeake Bay Program's Communications Office to help this office meet its goals of: (1) supporting the communications needs of Bay Program 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 Goal Implementation Teams and workgroups—i.e. **the subject matter experts**—to gather and translate information into language that resonates with local government leaders. The first step in this process is to work with subject matter experts to identify local engagement needs to meet CBP goals. 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:

1. Economic development
2. Public health and safety
3. Infrastructure maintenance and financing
4. Education

Current CBP Local Engagement Needs

As of spring 2019, most CBP local engagement needs relate to meeting the goals and outcomes in the [2014 Chesapeake Bay Watershed Agreement](#). There are 31 outcomes that fall under 10 goals in the Agreement. CBP Goal Implementation Teams and workgroups that oversee the outcomes have developed management strategies and workplans detailing how each outcome will be met by 2025. Out of the 31 outcomes, 29 have been identified as needing local government engagement in their respective management strategy and workplans:

- Black Duck
- Blue Crab Abundance
- Blue Crab Management
- Brook Trout
- Fish Habitat
- Fish Passage
- Forage Fish
- Riparian Forest Buffer
- Oyster
- 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
- Sustainable Schools

The challenge is 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 Priorities



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. like other stormwater green infrastructure practices, tree canopy [can intercept and filter rainfall](#) before it enters stormwater and sewerage systems (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. 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 5-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 a 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

Goal Implementation Teams and Workgroups that have identified local engagement needs will track and assess the effectiveness of this strategy over time through the Biennial Strategy Review System (SRS) and updates to their outcomes' workplans.

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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, *current*